

Kent County Council Attendance Service

Sellindge Primary School Attendance Policy

**Based on the DFE document 'Working Together to Improve School
Attendance'**

Incorporates new guidelines - implemented 19th August 2024

November 2025

Review: September 2026



Statement of Intent

Sellindge Primary 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 Sellindge Primary School.

The importance of school attendance

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to learn.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement, will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non teaching staff in school, the trust, or governing body, the local authority and other local partners.

The law on school attendance and the right to a full time education

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. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at a 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.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) 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 and punctuality undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour. If a pupil has attendance of 90% that is equivalent to them having one day off every 2 weeks. It is important for parents/carers to know that any absence, regardless of the reason, will affect their child's ability to make progress in their learning and reach their full potential.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first 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. Parents should use the absence line on the school telephone system to report any incidents of absence. Parents should not use email.

If your child is unwell and you are unsure whether to send your child to school then please contact the school office.

We would ask that all medical and dental appointments are scheduled before or after school or preferably in the school holidays. We realise this may not always be possible and we would ask that you provide evidence of the appointment in order for the absence to be authorised.

If you have any other concerns about your child's attendance please either contact Jo Wren or the school office.

Gates open at 8.45 am and pupils are expected to arrive by 9.00am. All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent, to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

The Role of the School Staff

Overall Responsibility for Attendance	Daily Responsibility for Attendance
Jo Wren Headteacher Sellindge Primary School Main Road Sellindge TN25 6JY headteacher@sellindge-ashford.kent.sch.uk 01303 812073	Bec Fuggle Office Manager Sellindge Primary School Main Road Sellindge TN25 6JY office@sellindge-ashford.kent.sch.uk 01303 812073

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher notifies the Office Manager of children whose attendance is causing concern. The Office Manager will, in turn, inform the headteacher.

It is the responsibility of Bec Fuggle (Office Manager/School 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
- Where there has been no communication, emails are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.

The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes) for further information on attendance codes please follow this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

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- Parents informed at end of terms 2 and 4 if their child's attendance has fallen below 95%. All parents are informed of attendance at the end of term 6.

Role and Responsibility of Kent County Council

All pupils

- Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services. Have a School Attendance Support Team (PIAS) that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.
- Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.
- Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

- Hold a termly conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so.
- Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance. If the issue persists, facilitate a voluntary early help assessment where appropriate and take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners.
- Provide the lead practitioner where all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.

Persistently absent pupils

- Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).

Severely absent pupils

- Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and: All services should make the group the top priority for support.

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

- Track local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers where they impact numerous schools.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

- Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families.

Support for pupils with a social worker (VSK – Virtual School Kent)

- Regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker in their area. Put in place personal education plans for looked after children. Secure regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after.

Role of School Governors

At Sellindge Primary School Governors take an active role in attendance improvement, support the school to prioritise attendance and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures. The HT updates governors 3 times per year to ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties. They regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

Timeline of School Action for Low Attendance

- 95 - 100% attendance -Attendance Officer to investigate and notify the head teacher of concerns Headteacher to contact parent if appropriate.
- 90 - 95% attendance - monitored carefully and parents advised and spoken to as considered necessary.
- Under 90% - these children are classed as persistent absentees, monitoring is in place and the School Liaison Officer may be informed.
- Where the level of absence has not improved and 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.

Children Missing Education

No child may 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 File (CTF) has been requested by another school.

Lateness

At Sellindge Primary School the register is taken at 9am and 1pm. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9:15 am and 1:15 pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for Prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

All attendance marks are recorded through Arbor, the schools MIS.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed (Lateness code U) during any possible 100 sessions leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence (Lateness Code U) is to be recorded.
- If unauthorised absence (Lateness Code U) 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

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 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 non-specific 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)
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Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) or severe persistent unauthorised absence (50% 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.

Local Authority Action may include:-

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home Visits
- Liaison with other agencies

- Fast Track to prosecution

Pupils with long term medical conditions or special educational needs

The school will work together with parents of pupils with long term medical conditions or special educational needs. Schools must be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put in additional support where necessary to help them access full time education. This will be done in partnership with parents.

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance

Please refer to: Kent County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence 2024

- 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 will be issued per parent, per child, eg 3 siblings absent for term time leave would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.
- 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).

Notice to improve

Please refer to: Kent County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence 2024)

A notice to improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a notice to improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage. Kent schools will issue a notice to improve for parentally-condoned absence and unauthorised absence. It will not be necessary to issue a notice to improve for term time holidays or leave of absence.

At the end of an unsatisfactory monitoring period, schools may request a penalty notice to be issued if this is considered the best course of action to improve attendance.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Holidays

Please refer to: Kent County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence 2024

Holidays **will not** be authorised. For unauthorised holidays code **G**

- A Penalty Notice will be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.

Exceptional Circumstance

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not be reasonably 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.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in 'exceptional circumstances' but agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body. 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 an absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to Kent County Council 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.

Penalty Notices

Please refer to: Kent County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence 2024

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £160 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 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 caused 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.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be £160 per parent, per child, paid within 28 days. This is reduced to £80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days.

Second Offence

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance within a 3 year period the amount will be £160 per parent, per child, paid within 28 days.

Third Offence and any further offences (within 3 years)

Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any 3 year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave and irregular attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be

presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. Magistrates fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in the Magistrates' Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

Reduced Timetables

Working together to improve school attendance DFE Guidance May 2023.

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 temporary part time timetable to meet their individual needs.

Exceptional circumstances include:

- There's a specific need for a pupil - eg medical condition
- It's in the pupil's best interests
- It's on a temporary basis
- A family bereavement
- A pupil joining the school has significant needs and it is being used for transition

A part time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit at which point the pupil is expected to attend full time, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part time timetable a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised. All application for reduced timetables are made to KCC.

November 2025