



Attendance Policy

This policy has been adopted by all schools within The Golden Thread Alliance

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1. Aims

The Golden Thread Alliance aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance and gives a high priority to:

- promoting good attendance/punctuality and reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence – with the aim of all pupils to achieve 96% + attendance at the end of the school year
- ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- training colleagues on registration procedures
- ensuring registers are accurately completed at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session
- promoting positive colleagues attitudes to pupils returning after absence to create an environment where pupils feel missed and want to come to school
- conveying to parents and carers the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- communicating to parents and carers so they are aware of their legal obligation to ensure children of a compulsory school age attend regularly
- acting early to address patterns of absence
- ensuring parents and carers are aware of the school's procedures for reporting absence and systems for dealing with poor attendance and lateness
- recognising parents and carers have a vital role to play in achieving regular school attendance and will endeavour to establish strong relationships with them
- supporting parents and carers to resolve any issues quickly and efficiently which may be affecting their child's attendance and punctuality
- ensuring that attendance concerns are identified early and addressed before they develop into persistent or severe absence
- recognising attendance as a key safeguarding responsibility and ensuring attendance concerns are considered within wider safeguarding arrangements
- supporting pupils to attend all sessions for the full duration of each school day unless there is a statutory reason preventing attendance.

This policy will be reviewed and updated following any updates to national and local legislation and guidance.

The Attendance Policy and Procedures will be regularly evaluated to ensure they are effective. We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance.

2. Introduction and Statement of Intent

The Golden Thread Alliance is committed to providing an inclusive and high-quality education and to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. It is vital that pupils attend regularly and punctually every day the school is open, if they are to:

- gain the greatest benefit from their education
- successfully fulfil their full potential
- take advantage of the opportunities presented to them.

The Trust defines regular attendance as attending every session of the school day and remaining in school for the full duration of those sessions, unless there is a statutory reason for absence.

Why regular attendance is so important:

Good attendance and punctuality are important life skills that children should acquire from an early age. Research has shown that regular attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience and ensures pupils develop physically, socially and academically to prepare them for a successful future. Children who attend school regularly:

- make better progress academically.
- are more confident socially.
- have more stable friendships.
- cope better with school routines and schoolwork.
- find learning easier.

Poor punctuality also has a detrimental impact on children's education and social wellbeing.

Children who arrive at school late:

- may miss important information and instructions given at the beginning of the day.
- will miss the opportunity to settle into the school day with their peers.
- will miss crucial learning opportunities.
- will disrupt other children's learning.
- are often embarrassed by arriving late and arrive flustered and not ready to learn.

3. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [Working together to improve school attendance Guidance](#) and [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#) from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#) and the 2024 amendment
- [Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [School inspection: toolkit, operating guides and information - GOV.UK](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold and our trust's funding agreement and articles of association.

This policy should be read alongside the Trust's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and reflects the safeguarding responsibilities outlined within Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026. The Trust recognises that persistent absence, severe absence, and patterns of non-attendance may be indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation, mental health concerns or wider safeguarding risks.

What the law says about School Attendance:

By law all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must receive a full-time education. Section 444(1a) of the Education Act 1996 states:

“If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly, without justification, then his (her) parent is guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted.”

Pupils are required to attend school for 190 days (380 sessions) in a single academic year (September to July). Any exceptions to this can only be taken with the full agreement of the Headteacher. This policy is informed by DFE Circular 11/91 “The education (pupil registration) (England). Regulations 2006 and Education Act 1996 section 444, the “School Attendance – Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence, “DFE 1994 – Paragraph 21, page 4 which reminds us:

“Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification (telephone call, written letter) in relation to a particular absence; does not, by itself, oblige the school to accept it.”

There is an expectation that over the course of an academic year a child’s attendance will be 96% or more. Absence that falls below 90% is categorised by the government as persistent absence. Absence that falls below 50% is categorised as severe absence.

Parents and carers should make every effort to ensure that their child is able to attend school for the whole academic year by trying to make medical appointments out of school time wherever possible, avoid booking any holidays during term time and avoid encouraging their child to stay at home for unjustifiable reasons (parentally condoned absence).

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Good regular attendance and punctuality at The Golden Thread Alliance is achieved by a whole school approach in partnership with parents and carers. This section outlines the specific roles and responsibilities:

The Board of Trustees is responsible for ensuring the Attendance Policy reflects the ethos of The Golden Thread Alliance, establishes the policy and considers feedback on its effectiveness.

The Local Governing Committee will monitor the implementation of the policy and keep it under review, feeding back recommended changes to the Board of Trustees. It will ensure it is communicated to pupils, parents and carers, it is non-discriminatory, and the expectations are clear. Local governors will support the school in ensuring high levels of attendance are maintained

and will do this by monitoring attendance figures for the whole school at least three times a year, ensure that colleagues receive adequate training on attendance and hold the Headteacher at each school accountable for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for attendance at their school and ensuring this policy is implemented. They may choose to delegate their responsibilities to another member of the Senior Leadership Team and/or the Attendance Officer. The Headteacher is responsible for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors, supporting colleagues with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils. In addition, they are responsible for monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies and issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

The Designated Senior Leadership Member (where responsibility has been delegated) is responsible for leading attendance across the school, offering a clear vision for attendance improvement. They will have an oversight of data analysis; devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified from the school's attendance data.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead The DSL will work closely with attendance colleagues to identify pupils whose attendance may indicate safeguarding concerns. Patterns of absence, persistent absence, severe absence, repeated lateness, frequent medical absence, partial timetables, emotionally based school avoidance and disengagement from education will be considered within the wider safeguarding context. Where appropriate, referrals will be made to Family Help, Children's Social Care or other agencies.

School Name	Designated Senior Leadership Member
West Hill Primary Academy	Katy Ward
Temple Hill Primary Academy	Jaya Dillon
The Riverview Academy	Kate Williams
Wrotham Road Primary School	Safiyah Miah
Fleetdown Primary Academy	Nicola King
Oakfield Primary Academy	Jill Gosbee
Culverstone Green Primary Academy	Charlotte Casey
Meopham Community Academy	Victoria Coombes

The Class Teacher/Associate Teacher in charge of the class at the beginning of the morning or afternoon sessions is responsible for accurately taking the register. Marking the attendance register is a legal requirement (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). The

class teacher should notify the Attendance Officer of any children whose attendance is causing them concern.

The Attendance Officer is responsible for ensuring:

- registers are taken accurately and on time by class teachers
- attendance and lateness records are up to date
- appropriate attendance codes are entered into the register and applied consistently (see Appendix 1)
- parents and carers are contacted on the first day of absence by phone if no reason for absence has been provided, and follow no contact absence procedures
- monitor individual pupil absence and issue appropriate attendance letters to parents and carers in a timely manner
- attendance is monitored across the school and at an individual level, identifying any patterns of absence and highlighting concerns about attendance to the to the Senior Leadership Team, Family Liaison Officer or if appropriate a member of the Safeguarding Team
- attendance data is provided to the Senior Leadership team on a weekly, termly or annual basis, as directed by the Senior Leadership Team, including information on key vulnerable groups.

School Name	Attendance Officer
West Hill Primary Academy	Debbie Parish
Temple Hill Primary Academy	Lucie Parsons
The Riverview Academy	Jessica Solly-Kemp
Wrotham Road Primary School	Kate Fielder
Fleetdown Primary Academy	Victoria Webster
Oakfield Primary Academy	Helen Rees
Culverstone Green Primary Academy	Stephanie Barnes-Farnham
Meopham Community Academy	Victoria Coombes

School Office/Admin Colleagues are expected to take accurate messages from parents and carers about absence and pass them on to the Attendance Officer.

Parental Responsibility

Parents¹ and carers have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child, and they should be allowed to take full advantage of the 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 antisocial behaviour.

It is the parent and carer's responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent, preferably by 8.30am, giving a clear reason for absence. This is a safeguarding issue so that all parties know that the child is safe. Parents and carers should contact the school daily, and advise when the child is returning. Parents and carers must ensure they have provided the school with more than one contact number, that it is kept up-to-date and is in working order.

Further details regarding the procedures for reporting absence can be found in Section 5.

¹ Parents in Education Law are defined as:

- ALL those with parental 'responsibility'; i.e., any biological parent if married or divorced (or unmarried, if named on the birth certificate). They do not have to live with the child. The consent of the resident parent is NOT required for their involvement. Only a Court can prevent it.
- • AND any adult who has 'care of the child' even if they do not have parental responsibility e.g., a live-in partner, step-parent or other carer.

5. Recording Attendance

5.1 Attendance Register

The school will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

The school will take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix One for the DfE attendance codes.

The school will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity

- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- The school will keep every entry on the attendance register in line with the retention policy.

Please see the grid below for the timings of each school day.

School Name	Register AM	Register PM
West Hill Primary Academy	8.50–9.00am	12.30–1.30pm
Temple Hill Primary Academy	8.50–9.05am (Nursery opens at 8.30am)	1.20–1.30pm Nursery 12.30–12.40pm
The Riverview Academy	8.50–9.05am	12.50pm – 13.25pm
Wrotham Road Primary School	8.45–9.05am	1.15pm–1.35pm Nursery 12.45pm
Fleetdown Primary Academy	8:50–9:00am	12:45 – 1:30pm
Oakfield Primary Academy	8:50–9:10am	1:10–1:40pm
Culverstone Green Primary Academy	8.50–9am	1:00–1:10pm
Meopham Community Academy	8:50–9:00am Nursery Sessions 8.30–11.30am	1:05 – 1:35pm Nursery Session 12.30–3.30pm

5.2 Unplanned Absence

The pupil's parents and carers must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by **8.30am** or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office (see also section 6).

The school will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Medical evidence will not routinely be requested. It will usually only be sought where absences are frequent, prolonged, recurring, where there are concerns regarding authenticity, or where support and reasonable adjustments need to be understood.

Where the absence is longer than three days and there are any doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school may ask the pupil's parent or carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. The school will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied with the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents and carers will be notified of this.

Absences due to illness that occur immediately before or after a school holiday will only be authorised if supported by appropriate medical evidence.

5.3 Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent or carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment, and every effort is made by parents and carers to allow the pupil to attend school before and/or after the appointment.

However, we encourage parents and carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary, attend school before/after their appointment, and wear school uniform to make it easier to return to school afterwards.

The pupil's parents and carers must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 6.1 for information regarding term-time absences the school can authorise.

5.4 Lateness and Punctuality

It is expected that children arrive to school in good time and before registration begins. A pupil who arrives late before the register has closed (during registration) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L). Should a pupil arrive after the register has closed, they will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U).

Persistent late arrival after the register has closed (coded "U") will be highlighted to parents and carers, and may result in a referral to Kent County Council for a Penalty Notice or possible prosecution. See Section 6.3 regarding Penalty Notices.

5.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil expected to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will call the pupil's parents and carers on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. The school may also contact other emergency contacts as provided by parents and carers, and try other methods of communication to make contact e.g. text, email, etc.

As part of our safeguarding procedures, if the school are unable to contact parents and carers, then on day three (or sooner if deemed necessary) an unannounced home visit will be made to the child's registered home address to establish the safety of the child and the reason for absence. If the school are unable to ascertain the whereabouts of the child during the visit, this may result in a referral being made to Social Services or other relevant authorities/external agencies.

If no contact is made within ten days and our investigations still do not establish the whereabouts of the child, then a Child Missing Education (CME) referral to the Local Authority will be completed, as per statutory requirements.

The school will maintain a log of calls and home visits made and request written supporting evidence, or explanations, from parents and carers if it is believed to be necessary. This may also include a request for evidence from a GP, hospital or clinic if the school believes it is necessary or where the absence is over three days and/or where there are concerns about a child's attendance.

Where appropriate, the school will offer support to the pupil and/or their parents and carers to improve attendance. Schools will identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals.

Schools will consider whether attendance concerns may indicate wider family vulnerabilities and whether support through Family Help or other early intervention services should be offered before attendance difficulties escalate.

Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with the school may issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 6.3 below), as appropriate.

The school will consider whether repeated illness absence, failure to access medical treatment, failure to attend appointments, or unmet medical needs may indicate wider safeguarding concerns requiring discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

5.6 Reporting to Parents and Carers

The school will regularly inform parents and carers about their child's attendance and absence levels at parents' evenings, in reports and at meetings. Parents and carers may also access details regarding their child's attendance on Arbor.

Schools within the Golden Thread Alliance use "[A Star Attendance](#)" system. The system is designed to enhance the ability to track, communicate and address attendance concerns more efficiently. If a letter is issued to parents and carers regarding attendance, this may be done through the system. Parents and carers should ensure that should they receive an email from A Star Attendance, that the letter is read as it will include important messages regarding their child's attendance.

6. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

6.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Golden Thread Alliance fully appreciates the experience that children have on holiday with their families is incredibly valuable and can promote learning. However, we are duty-bound to comply with the regulations set out by the government.

The Headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave

- A temporary, time-limited part-time (or reduced) timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as rare, unavoidable, significant and for a short period of time.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) and carer(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart for religious observance. Pupils should attend school on the days surrounding those set apart for religious observance
- Parents and carers travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the Local Authority

- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

There may be occasions where, even in exceptional circumstances Headteacher's will be unable to authorise absence, for example during SAT's testing (dates are published in advance) and at important transitional periods (beginning of new school year).

Where parents and carers fail to apply in advance, or proceed with the absence when it has not been granted this will be marked as unauthorised (Code G). Unauthorised absences of ten sessions or more (five days) can result in a referral to Kent County Council and a fixed penalty notice may be issued (See section 6.3). Children who do not return to school for ten or more days after the expected return date will be reported to Kent County Council as a 'Child Missing Education' and may be taken off roll if the school if joint enquiries between the school and Local Authority to locate the pupil and both parties agree there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend the school again ([Children Missing Education, DFE Guidance](#)).

6.2 Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are those which the Headteacher does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given.

Unauthorised absences are considered an offence by a parent or carer and can include (but are not limited to):

- Persistent non-specific absences that have not been properly explained e.g., poorly/unwell, or where the authenticity of the illness is in doubt
- Children who arrive late to school after the register has closed
- Absence of sibling if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Confusion over return to school dates
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Birthdays, shopping trips, days out, waiting in for a delivery/repair man, parents and carers being ill or looking after a family relative.
- Preparation/revision for School Selection Tests
- Family holidays that have not been granted by the Headteacher or have not been notified in advance.

If you are unsure whether your child should attend, please seek guidance from the Attendance Officer. Do not keep your child at home as a "precaution", the school will always monitor your child and call you if they are too unwell to be in school. **Parents and carers can also refer to NHS Guidance ([Is my child too ill for school? - NHS](#)) to determine if an illness warrants absence from school.**

Sometimes children can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best solved between the school, the parents and carers, and the pupil as soon as possible. If your

child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them for attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse. Further guidance can be found in the [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance, DFE Guidance](#).

6.3 Sanctions

The school or Local Authority can fine or prosecute parents and carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. Our schools will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Before implementing formal attendance interventions or legal action, schools will consider any duties arising under the Equality Act 2010, including whether a pupil has a disability, whether reasonable adjustments have been considered and whether additional support may be required to address barriers to attendance.

Penalty Notices

The Local Authority or the police can fine parents and carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the absence meets threshold for a penalty notice, the school will refer to the Local Authority for the penalty notice to be issued.

Before referring to the Local Authority for a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (ten sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of ten school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent and carer who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent(s) and carer(s) who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, each parent or carer must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parents or carers in respect of the same pupil, the parents or carers must pay £160 within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the parents or carers in respect of the same child within three years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those three years, alternative action will be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other attendance legal interventions.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents and carers allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first five days of a suspension or permanent exclusion (where the school has notified the parents and carers that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, are not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent or carer must pay £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 between days 22 and 28.

Notices to Improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents and carers do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents and carers a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the Local Authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents and carers under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between three and six weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Penalty notices are issued in accordance with [Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct](#). Further information can be found here; [Penalty Notices – KELS](#).

7. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

The Trustees, Governors, Senior Leaders in the Trust, Headteacher and colleagues in partnership with parents and carers have a duty to promote regular attendance at school.

The Golden Thread Alliance aims to provide an environment which enables all members of our community to reach for excellence and we actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils. The schools celebrate success and may use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The schools will advise parents and carers of their child's individual attendance level at parents' evenings, in reports and at meetings.

The Golden Thread Alliance recognises that from time-to-time situations may arise which make it difficult for parents and carers to ensure their child's attendance. For example: housing issues, health issues, behavioural issues or financial issues. Please advise your school at the earliest opportunity if there are any issues that will impact on your child's attendance, so that they can work with you and may be able to provide additional support.

8. Supporting Pupils Who Are Absent or Returning to School

8.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

The Trust recognises that some groups may face additional barriers to attendance, including children with SEND, children who have a social worker, previously looked-after children, young carers and children experiencing mental health difficulties. Attendance support will be tailored to individual need.

The Trust recognises that prejudice-based harm, including racism, faith-based abuse and other discriminatory behaviour, may affect a pupil's attendance, wellbeing and sense of safety. Attendance concerns linked to these issues will be considered within safeguarding processes and addressed appropriately.

The Trust will identify, monitor and support young carers whose caring responsibilities may affect attendance, punctuality or engagement with learning. Where appropriate, schools will facilitate access to Family Help and other support services.

Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have long-term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils is the same as it is for any other pupil but additional support may need to be provided.

In developing this support, the usual processes relevant to any attendance case including;

- Understanding the individual needs of the pupil and family
- Working in partnership with the pupil and family to put in-school support in place and working with other the Local Authority and other agencies where external support is needed (and available)
- Regularly reviewing and updating the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs.

In cases of both long term physical or mental ill health, school colleagues are not expected to diagnose or treat physical or mental health conditions, but they are expected to work together with families and other agencies with the aim of ensuring regular attendance for every pupil.

They will:

- Facilitate any relevant pastoral support with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible whilst supporting the underlying health issue.
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents and carers.
- Consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxious feelings about school attendance.
- Make a sickness return to the Local Authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days.

Remote education will only be used where appropriate, for the shortest possible period, and as part of a planned reintegration strategy to support a pupil's return to full-time education.

Schools will consider whether Family Help support may be appropriate and will work collaboratively with families and external agencies to improve outcomes for children whose attendance is affected by multiple or complex vulnerabilities.

Family Help may be considered where attendance difficulties are linked to unmet family needs, housing instability, parental mental health, domestic abuse, financial hardship, caring responsibilities, family conflict or other vulnerabilities affecting a child's welfare, wellbeing or ability to attend school regularly.

8.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

For pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, schools will:

- Work in partnership with parents and carers to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.
- Work in partnership with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under

section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents and carers.

- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the Local Authority. Where needed, schools will work with the Local Authority to review and amend the education health and care plan to incorporate the additional or different attendance support identified.

For pupils who have long term illness, and are unable to attend school regularly due to this (more than 10 school days in an academic year), the school will consider a referral to The Rosewood School via the Local Authority. Please refer to the Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions policy. [Children with long-term illness - Kent County Council](#), [The Rosewood School - KELS](#)

8.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

We recognise that a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending school and schools will therefore always seek to have a plan in place for children when they return to school. This may include the use of part-time timetables, staggered starts and interventions to support building confidence and bridging gaps in the child's learning and progress.

9. Attendance Monitoring

9.1 Monitoring Attendance

The Trust and school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) regularly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the Department of Education (DfE) on request. The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.

Data will be collected regularly and published at national and Local Authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The Trust and schools will benchmark its attendance data at whole trust, school, year group and cohort level against local, regional and national averages, as well as statistically similar schools to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the Local Governing Committee, and/or Board of Trustees.

9.2 Analysing Attendance

The Trust and schools will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance

- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Identify attendance patterns across the trust to identify common issues and barriers and share effective practice between schools

Attendance analysis will include consideration of key vulnerable and priority groups, including:

- pupils with SEND
- disadvantaged pupils and those eligible for free school meals
- pupils with a social worker
- previously looked after children
- young carers
- pupils receiving Family Help (previously known as Early Help) support
- pupils who are persistently absent or severely absent.

Schools will use this information to identify emerging concerns and provide support at the earliest opportunity.

9.3 Using Data to Improve Attendance

The Trust and schools will:

- Identify emerging patterns of attendance decline at the earliest opportunity and intervene before pupils become persistently absent.
- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that have been identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absence may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families (see section 9.4 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the Local Governing Committee/Board of Trustees, and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- work collaboratively with local authorities, other schools, academy trusts and attendance services to share effective practice, develop attendance expertise and support system-wide improvement.

9.4 Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the Trust/school's strategy for improving the life chances of children.

The schools will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#). Particular consideration will be given to children who are persistently absent or severely absent, as these children are recognised as being at increased risk of harm, exploitation, abuse, neglect, poor educational outcomes and social isolation. Attendance concerns will be reviewed alongside safeguarding information to identify overlapping vulnerabilities.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents and carers of pupils who the school (and/or Local Authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - o Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - o Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - o Explain the help that is available
 - o Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - o Review any existing actions or interventions
 - o Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the Local Authority, where relevant
 - o Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
 - o Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 6.3, above)

The Golden Thread Alliance's expectation is that a child's attendance is 96% or above at the end of the school year. The school closely monitors attendance and punctuality and the following staged process will be used to manage attendance.

Child's Attendance	Action
96% +	Excellent
94-95%	Good – continue to build upon this
90-94%	Causing concern – Children's attendance is below average and they will be missing out. Parents and Carers need to work with the school to improve the situation. Children's attendance will be monitored closely and the school will issue: • Letter 1 – advise attendance is getting low and will be closely monitored and will need to improve.

	• Letter 2 – should further absence occur; this letter will advise attendance has not improved and the school may request additional information or supporting evidence for future absences where attendance concerns remain or where further understanding of a pupil's needs is required, and/or invited to a meeting. • Letter 3 – should further absence occur; this letter will advise that if there is no improvement, the school may make a referral to the Local Authority. For cases that require intensive family support, the school may discuss with the parents or carers about making a referral to Family Help. At any stage during the process the parent or carer can advise the school of any issues they may be experiencing that may be having an adverse effect on their child's attendance.
Below 90%	Serious Cause for Concern – Any child whose attendance is below 90% is considered by the government to have persistent absence. This may result in a referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration for prosecution. Referrals to the Local Authority regarding attendance are made when: • A pattern of irregular attendance has developed • A period of non-attendance has been established • letters sent by the school have met with little/no response • there is a lack of co-operation in ensuring regular attendance Local Authority action may include: • Attendance Improvement Meeting • Home visits • Liaison with other agencies • Fast track to prosecution

At any stage of the process the welfare and safety of the child is paramount, therefore if the school has concerns about the wellbeing of the child, representatives from the school may attend the child's registered address, make a referral to Children's Social Care or contact other agencies such as housing association, Family Help or the Police.

It is noted within the statutory guidance [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#), " If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g. an education, health and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect. Schools and local authorities should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, conduct a full Children's Social Care assessment. Further information is available in the statutory guidance on [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)".

10. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Local Authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Trust Safeguarding Lead. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Board of Trustees.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix One: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

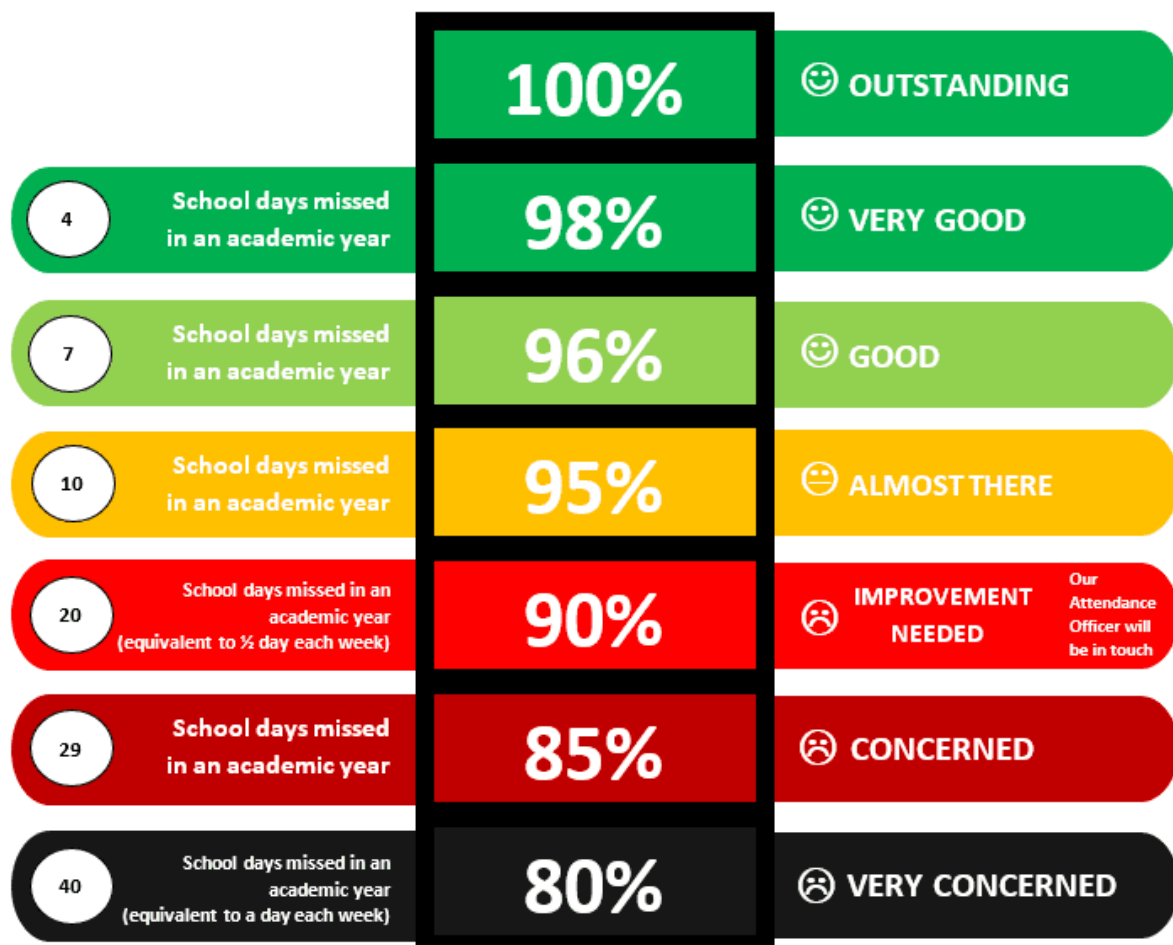
Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the Local Authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the Local Authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available

Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		

z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Attendance Ladder



Request for leave during term time form

Please read the following information carefully before completing this form.

At [school name] we work hard to support all our pupils and their families to ensure that good attendance is achieved. Whilst we appreciate that the experience that children have on holiday with their parents and carers can be valuable, from 1 September 2013 the Department of Education amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the headteacher's ability to authorise any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances". In general, a holiday will not be considered exceptional circumstance. The law does not grant parents and carers an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. (The meaning of 'parent' in relation to a child includes any person with Parental Responsibility or who has care of the child, as per Section 576 of the Education Act 1996).

You must have Parental Responsibility to request an absence in term time or have written permission from someone with Parental Responsibility. **Headteachers are unable to authorise leave retrospectively, please therefore ensure this application is submitted at least 4 weeks before any leave of absence.**

If your application for leave results in the absence being unauthorised and you decide to proceed with the absence, then we may make a referral to Kent County Council.

The Local Authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice. If the absence meets threshold for a penalty notice, the school will refer to the Local Authority for the penalty notice to be issued.

Before referring to the Local Authority for a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days, per parent, per child.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days, per parent, per child. There is no reduced sum available in this instance.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as other attendance legal interventions.

For further guidance please visit; <https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2024/07/aaa-guide-for-parents-on-school-attendance-19th-Aug-version.pdf>

Parent(s) and Carer(s) Details:

Name(s):

Address:

Contact Numbers:

Pupil Details:

Name:Date of Birth:

Class

Att. % (office Use)

Details of Absence:First Date of absence:Last day of absence:Date of Return to School:Evidence supplied:

Yes ☐ No ☐

Reason for absence (continue on a separate sheet if necessary and attach any supporting evidence):

Declaration:			
I/We have read the above information and understand that should my /our child(ren) absence(s) be unauthorised, I/we may be subject to a Penalty Notice or other Legal Action.			
Signed (Parent/Carer):		Date:	

Headteachers Decision:			
☐ Request Unauthorised ☐ Request Authorised ☐ Request Part Authorised (dates authorised _____)			
Signed:		Date:	

Office Use Only:			
Date Letter Sent to Parents:		Date FPN Requested:	
Date Arbor Updated:		Days/Sessions Absent:	