

Palace Wood Primary School

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Palace Wood

PRIMARY SCHOOL



Written by	Serpin Childs
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This policy has been impact assessed by Claire Cairns in order to ensure that it does not have an adverse effect on race, gender or disability equality.

Statement of Intent

Palace Wood 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. Attendance is reported regularly in the school newsletter. The Governors, Head Teacher and staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at Palace Wood.

Our whole school attendance target is 96%.

Why attend Palace Wood Primary School?

At Palace Wood Primary School, our main aim is to offer our children a safe, joyous and purposeful experience. Our carefully considered curriculum aims to ignite curiosity in our children; teach them life skills and support them in becoming compassionate individuals who will, in their future, contribute positively and successfully to society.

We offer all our children the following enrichment opportunities throughout their time at Palace Wood so they happily skip into school each day and leave smiling!



Forest School is learning in nature. We have our own dedicated staff team who lead these sessions for up to 3 terms per class, each year.



Outdoor Learning and Play is our lunchtime offer. The outside areas consists of zones the children can choose to play in, such as: digging, dancing, cycling, ball games, a sand pit, mud kitchen and singing.



Our art studio is a dedicated space for the teaching and learning of art, led by our own team of teachers with art backgrounds. Every child is an artist in this studio!

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attends school regularly and arrives on time. Full 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 by law. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk of educational under-achievement, encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent, before the registers are officially closed at 9:00am for session 1 and 1.30pm for session 2. This can be done by either, calling the school office or using Studybugs. This is a safeguarding issue so that all parties know that your child is safe. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

The school gates open at 8:25am. Classroom doors open at 8:30am. Pupils are expected to arrive at school between 8:30am and 8:40am. At 8:40am, the classroom doors will close for the register to be taken. Pupils arriving after 8:40am will be marked as late (code L) and must report to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded. If the child arrives after 9:00am, then this is known as an unauthorised lateness (code U) and will be counted towards the child's unauthorised absences.

The Department for Education have produced a guide for parents to help them understand how to work with the school and local authority effectively in relation to their child's attendance at school and getting the right support:

<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2022/12/aaa-guide-for-parents-on-school-attendance.pdf>

The Role of School Staff

Clare Cairns (Headteacher) has overall responsibility for attendance. The school Attendance Champion is Serpin Childs (Acting Deputy Headteacher).

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 in those pupils who are present, and Mrs Bryer (Family Liaison Officer (Family Liaison Officer) with support from the school office, deals with any missing marks. The class teacher notifies either Mrs Bryer (FLO), Mrs Childs (Attendance Champion) or Mrs Cairns (Headteacher) of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of FLO, with support from the school office, where necessary, 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, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence within a seven day reply deadline before the absence is unauthorised;
- the appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes);
- parents informed regularly of child's attendance figure, with their end of year report, at parent's evenings and at the end of each term.

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Champion to ensure:

- any child with attendance at 90% (classed by the Government as a persistent absentee) or less will be closely monitored and discussed with the School Liaison Officer (SLO) where necessary.
- any child with attendance at 50% (classed by the Government as a severe absentee) or less will be closely monitored and discussed with the School Liaison Officer (SLO) where necessary.
- appropriate strategies are put into place to support pupils and families whose attendance is causing concern.
- that relevant information for parents is present on the school website to refer to. This will include information regarding infectious diseases, how to report and absence and our policy.

Children Missing Education

No child may be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Attendance Service. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed and the digital front door used.

Punctuality

Arriving late to school can be unsettling for children and disruptive to the class when lessons have already begun; therefore, it is important that children arrive to school on time.

At Palace Wood Primary School, the register is taken at 8:40am (session 1) and 1:15pm (session 2). Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the school office and report to reception where the pupil's name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register officially closes at 9.00am. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late (Code 'U') which will count as an unauthorised absence.

If a pupil has a record of 10 or more sessions of lateness with the Code U within 10 school weeks, then the school will inform the KCC attendance service team, which may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution for the pupil's parents/carers.

If a pupil is at risk of meeting the threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions within 10 school weeks, then the Headteacher, Attendance Champion, FLO and/or SLO will seek to meet with the pupil's parents/carers in a supportive manner to discuss any barriers and measures to be taken to improve the attendance of the pupil.

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from 19th August 2024 [KCC Penalty Notice Code of Conduct \(kelsi.org.uk\)](https://www.kelsi.org.uk)

Reporting and Authorising Absence

It is the responsibility of the child's parents/carers, to notify the school of any absences. This should be done via Studybugs (link through the school website, or App) or by telephoning the school. If a child is absent and the school have not received notification from the parents/carers, the school office will attempt to make contact as soon as possible as part of our safeguarding measures. If we are unsuccessful in making contact, the school may decide to carry out a home visit to ascertain the whereabouts and safety of the child. This is in line with our safeguarding policy.

Illness/ medical reasons:

We understand that children become ill, particularly during the winter months; therefore, if your child becomes too ill for school, please inform the school via Studybugs or by telephoning the school office. When notifying the school, the reason for absence must be given in full i.e. vomiting; high temperature; chickenpox etc. so the school can advise when it is safe for the child to return to school. This is to ensure the school takes the appropriate measures to prevent certain illnesses from spreading. It is expected that, when possible, an expected return to school date is given. Until then, the school must be contacted every day of the absence until the child returns.

The school follows the NHS guidance, 'Is my child too ill to go to school?' [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

Medical Appointments:

We strongly advise that medical appointments are made outside of school hours. In unavoidable circumstances where an appointment falls during school hours, we request that the appointment takes place at the very start or end of the school day so learning disruption is kept to a minimum and the pupil does not have a significant amount of learning to catch up on.

Other leave of absence requests:

All requests for a leave of absence must be placed in writing (letter or email) and marked for the attention of Mrs Cairns, Headteacher. Only the Headteacher can authorise absence for approved reasons. Where there is doubt, the Headteacher, on behalf of the governing body, should take a consistent approach. The absence must be unavoidable. Parents/carers will be notified in writing or via email of the decision of the Headteacher.

Authorised absence codes will only be used after there has been some communication between the parent and school.

The following reasons are examples of the kinds of absence or lateness that will not be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness, e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings or other family members who are ill
- Oversleeping
- Bad weather
- Running late
- Traffic
- To care for other family members
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates

- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without good reason
- Child's or family member's birthday
- Shopping trip
- Day out (theatre, theme park, activity centre etc.)
- Holidays of any nature during term time
- Parental/family work-related trips or commitments

Exceptional cases for absence should be rare, but may include:

- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Or where the school has evidence that there are other rare, pressing personal issues for a family that would warrant a short break from school.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are *rare, significant, unavoidable* and *short*. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that the request for absence is always at the Headteacher's discretion which also determines the length of the authorised absence.

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 granted leave from the school
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

By law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

Persistent and Severe Absence

Any child with attendance of 90% or below (regardless of the reason for any absences) is considered to be a **Persistent Absentee (PA)** by the government. This equates to 2 days off school each month.

Any child with attendance of 50% or below is classed as a **Severe Absentee (SA)**.

If your child is persistently or severely absent, we will seek to arrange a meeting with the family to discuss the cause of the absence rate and what is needed to make improvements. This may result in the creation of a formal attendance contract between the family and the school, or referrals to services such as Early Help.

If persistent absence continues, despite support being in place, or the parents/carers do not engage with the support, the school will seek the assistance of the KCC Attendance Service, PIAS, which includes the SLO (School Liaison Officer).

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents, minutes of any meetings and any other relevant information are forwarded to the KCC Attendance Service.

Timeline of School Action for Low Attendance

- 95 – 100% attendance – class teachers monitor attendance. If a teacher has concerns, they must be reported to FLO or Attendance Champion.
- 90 - 95% attendance – class teacher to monitor and report those whose attendance is declining to Attendance Champion.
- Below 90% - monitored by Attendance Champion and FLO on a fortnightly basis. Consider formal meetings with parents; Notice to Improve or Attendance Service referral where absences have not been authorised and referral criteria-are met.

Meetings will be held between Headteacher, SLO, FLO and Attendance Champion to monitor and agree actions for children with attendance below 90%.

Holidays in Term Time

The school discourages any holiday during term time and would encourage all children to attend school regularly. The Headteacher is unable to authorise term-time absence for reasons of recreation or leisure in any capacity.

If a child is absent in term-time for a holiday, the school must be notified in writing prior to the holiday being taken via a letter or email marked for the attention of the Headteacher. The child/children's name, class name and dates of absence must be supplied alongside the reason for the absence.

The school will write to the parents/carers of the child/children via letter or email to confirm the dates of absence and that the holiday will be unauthorised. The correspondence will also state the procedures that may be followed in relation to penalty notices and/or prosecution as set out by the government if the national threshold for unauthorised absence has been met.

Penalty Notices Proceedings

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from August 2024 [KCC Penalty Notice Code of Conduct \(kelsi.org.uk\)](https://www.kelsi.org.uk)

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (and subsequent amendments) set out how penalty notices for school absence must be used.

The national threshold for unauthorised absence has been met when a child has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) within 10 school weeks (a school week

means any week in which there is at least one school session), with one of, or a combination of the following codes:

- Code G (unauthorised leave for a term-time holiday)
- Code O (other unauthorised absence)
- Code U (the child attended school after the register ended)

This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

A penalty notice 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.

If in an individual case the local authority (or other authorised officer) believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events.

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement without the need for criminal prosecution. Penalty notices are issued to each parent of each child in all cases. Only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to each parent of each child in respect of a particular child will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent/s in respect of the same child/ren is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent/s in respect of the same child/ren within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other attendance legal interventions.

The payment for penalty notices must be paid directly to the local authority. The school does not receive the funds from a penalty notice. There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice.

Notice to Improve

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent/carer 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/carer, or have not worked, a Notice to Improve is usually sent to give parents/carers a final chance to engage in support.

What sufficient improvement looks like can be decided on a case by case basis taking the individual family's circumstances into account. For some families, no further unauthorised absences will be appropriate, for others some absence may be tolerable if considerable improvement is seen. Details of what sufficient improvement looks like for each case is made clear in the Notice to Improve.

Where it is clear that improvement is not being made, it may be appropriate to issue a penalty notice before the improvement period has ended. For example, a Notice to Improve stated there should be no further unauthorised absences in a 6-week period but the pupil is absent for unauthorised reasons in the first week. Parents/carers will be informed before a penalty notice is issued if it is before the end of the improvement period.