ST MARGARET'S COLLIER STREET
CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

St Margaret's Collier Street CE Primary School

Growing as we learn. Learning as we grow. Rooted in Jesus.

1. Policy details

Approved by	Full Governing Body
Date approved	Pending Governor Approval
Next review	[date — annually]
Senior Attendance Champion	Mr T Wyatt-Hughes, Headteacher
Attendance officer	Mr T Wyatt-Hughes, Headteacher, supported by Mrs L Bentley, Attendance Admin
Contact for attendance	School office: 01892 730264 or office@collier-street.kent.sch.uk
Statutory basis	DfE *Working together to improve school attendance* (July 2026) and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
Local authority	Kent County Council, Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS)

This policy should be read alongside our Child Protection, Behaviour, SEND, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions, Equality, Anti-Bullying and Complaints policies.

A copy of this policy is available from the school office and is published on the school website.

2. Vision and aims

At St Margaret's, every child is uniquely made and loved by God. In the parable of the sower, the seed that falls on good soil takes root and produces a plentiful crop (Matthew 13:1–23). We want school to be good soil for every child, where they are rooted, nurtured and able to grow. Children can only grow as learners and as people if they are in school, so good attendance is part of how we live out our vision.

We expect every pupil to attend every day, on time, unless absence is unavoidable or authorised. Regular attendance helps children to:

- make good progress in their learning
- build friendships and feel part of our school family
- develop routines and independence that prepare them for secondary school and later life
- stay safe, as school is a protective place for children

Our aims are to:

- set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- promote and celebrate good attendance
- act early to address patterns of absence, before they become entrenched
- reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence

- make sure every pupil has the full-time education they are entitled to
- build strong, trusting relationships with families, so that the right support is in place

We recognise that absence is often a sign of wider barriers. Our approach is **support first**: we listen, understand and help, and we use legal measures only when support has not worked or is not appropriate.

3. Legal framework

This policy follows the DfE statutory guidance *Working together to improve school attendance* (July 2026, replacing the August 2024 edition) and *School attendance: parental responsibility measures*. It has regard to:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996, including the parental duty in section 7 to ensure a child of compulsory school age receives a suitable full-time education
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 and the National Framework for Penalty Notices
- the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils
- the Children Act 1989, including young carers' needs assessments (section 17ZA)
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (current version) and *Children missing education* statutory guidance
- *Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school* and *Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs*
- *Summary of support for pupils with attendance difficulties linked to SEND or mental health*
- the Kent County Council Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct

A child reaches compulsory school age on 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday, whichever comes first. Reception children below that age are not legally required to attend, but we expect the same high attendance, as the habits formed in Reception last.

4. The school day and registers

	Time
Gates open	8.45am
Pupils in class	by 8.50am
Morning register taken	8.50am
Morning register closes	9.00am
Afternoon register taken	1.00pm
Afternoon register closes	1.10pm
End of the school day	3.20pm

The school week is 32.5 hours, in line with the DfE expectation for a minimum school week.

Taking the register

- Class teachers take the register electronically on Bromcom at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

- Registers are taken at the same time for all registered pupils, including those on part-time timetables or phased returns. This is a legal requirement.
- Each register stays open for 10 minutes, the same length for both sessions, in line with the DfE limit of no longer than 30 minutes.
- Every pupil is recorded as present, attending an approved off-site educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances, using the national codes in the table below.
- Where an absence is unexplained, the correct code is entered as soon as the reason is known, and no later than 5 working days after the session.
- Any amendment to the register records the original entry, the new entry, the reason, the date and the name and role of the person making it.
- Every register entry is kept for 6 years.

Attendance codes

Code	Meaning	Counts as
/ \	Present (morning / afternoon)	Present
L	Late, arrived before the register closed	Present
K	Education provision arranged by the local authority	Attending an approved activity
V	Educational visit or trip	Attending an approved activity
P	Approved sporting activity	Attending an approved activity
W	Work experience	Attending an approved activity
B	Any other approved educational activity	Attending an approved activity
D	Dual registered, attending another setting	Attending an approved activity
C1	Regulated performance or employment abroad	Authorised leave
M	Medical or dental appointment	Authorised leave
J1	Interview	Authorised leave
S	Study leave	Authorised leave
X	Not of compulsory school age	Not counted
C2	Temporary part-time timetable	Authorised leave
C	Exceptional circumstances	Authorised leave
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Authorised absence
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
I	Illness (physical or mental health)	Authorised absence
E	Suspended or excluded, no alternative provision	Authorised absence
Q	Lack of access arrangements, including home-to-school travel not yet arranged	Unable to attend
Y1 to Y7	Unavoidable cause, such as transport failure, travel disruption, school closure or public health law	Unable to attend
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Unauthorised absence
N	Reason not yet established	Unauthorised until resolved
O	Other or unknown reason	Unauthorised absence
U	Arrived after the register closed	Unauthorised absence
Z	Prospective pupil not yet on roll	Administrative
#	Planned whole-school closure	Administrative

5. Reporting absence and leave of absence

If your child is unwell or cannot attend

1. Phone the school office on 01892 730264 before 9.00am on the first day of absence, or email office@collier-street.kent.sch.uk.
2. Give the reason for the absence and when you expect your child to return.
3. Contact the school again on each further day of absence, unless you have agreed otherwise with the office.

We record absence for physical or mental illness as authorised, unless we have a genuine concern about whether the illness is authentic.

Medical evidence

We ask for evidence of every medical or dental appointment in term time, such as an appointment card, letter, text or email confirming the date and time. This keeps our attendance records robust, accountable and fair to all families.

For illness, we accept a parent's report in most cases. We will ask for medical evidence, such as a prescription or a letter from a GP or hospital, where:

- a child's health needs are complex, long term or frequently recurring, so that we can put the right support in place
- illness absence is prolonged or repeated
- we have a genuine and reasonable doubt that an absence is due to illness

If evidence is not provided when asked, or we are not satisfied that an absence is due to illness, we will tell parents and record the absence as unauthorised.

Medical and dental appointments

Please make appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, tell the office in advance and keep your child out of school for the shortest time necessary. Your child should come to school before and after the appointment.

Leave of absence in term time

The headteacher can only grant leave of absence in the circumstances set out in the 2024 regulations:

- taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- attending an interview
- study leave for a public examination
- a temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- exceptional circumstances

Leave is at the headteacher's discretion, including how long it lasts. Requests must be made in advance by a parent the child normally lives with, using the leave of absence form from the school office, and at least 2 weeks before the leave where possible. Leave cannot be granted after it has been taken.

There are no automatic approvals or refusals. Each request is considered on its own facts and context. Exceptional circumstances are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. Examples we may consider include:

- the serious illness or death of a close family member, or a family crisis

- the funeral of a close relative
- the wedding or graduation ceremony of an immediate family member, usually for 1 day, with evidence
- representing the county or country at a sporting or performing arts event
- recovery time after an operation

Family holidays are not normally exceptional circumstances, so leave for a holiday is very unlikely to be granted. Leave will not be granted for protest activity during school hours.

Unauthorised holiday is recorded as code G and may lead to a penalty notice (see section 9).

Other authorised absence

Absence may also be authorised for:

- religious observance, on a day set apart exclusively for observance by the religious body to which the parents belong
- pupils travelling with their parents for occupational purposes, where the parent's trade or business requires travel and the family has no fixed abode (for example, some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, Showpeople, circus families and bargees). We ask parents to tell us in advance, and we work with them and other schools to arrange dual registration where possible
- a suspension or exclusion where no alternative provision has been arranged

6. Punctuality and lateness

Arriving on time helps children settle calmly and start the day with their class. Five minutes late every day adds up to more than 2 days of lost learning across a school year.

- Pupils who arrive after 8.50am must come in through the school office with an adult, who gives the reason for lateness. The office records the reason and the time of arrival.
- A pupil who arrives before the register closes at 9.00am is marked late (code L), which counts as present.
- A pupil who arrives after the register has closed is marked U, which counts as an unauthorised absence for that session, unless there is a reason that justifies an authorised code.
- We monitor lateness weekly. Where a pattern of lateness develops, the class teacher or office will speak with parents first, then the headteacher will invite parents to a meeting to agree support.
- Persistent late arrival after the register closes counts towards unauthorised absence and can lead to a notice to improve and a penalty notice (see section 9).

Pupils who need to leave early, for example for an appointment, must be collected from the office by an adult, and the time is recorded.

7. How we support attendance

Following up absence on the first day

Where a pupil does not arrive and we have not been told why, the school will:

1. Phone parents on the morning of the first day, then try every emergency contact, and email.
2. If no one can be reached and there are concerns for the child's welfare, a member of staff may make a home visit. If there is still no contact, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider asking the police for a welfare check.

3. Contact parents on each further day the absence is unexplained.
4. Treat unexplained or repeated absence as a possible safeguarding concern, in line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

This is why we ask every family to give us at least 2 up-to-date emergency contact numbers.

Promoting and celebrating good attendance

- We recognise pupils and families whose attendance has improved significantly, so that every child can be celebrated.
- We remind families regularly, through newsletters and the website, why attendance matters and how to get help.
- We talk with children in class and in collective worship about why coming to school every day matters, for their learning, their friendships and their wellbeing, so they understand it for themselves.

What attendance figures mean

Attendance	Days missed in a year	What it means
97% and above	5 or fewer	Excellent. Your child is able to make the most of every opportunity.
95% to 96.9%	6 to 9	Good, but some learning is being missed.
90% to 94.9%	10 to 19	A concern. Your child is missing important learning and experiences. We will contact you to offer support.
Below 90%	more than 19	Persistent absence. Your child is missing at least half a day every week. We will meet you to agree a support plan.
50% or below	95 or more	Severe absence. We will work with the local authority and other services to support your child back into school.

Figures are based on a 190-day school year.

Our support first approach

We follow the DfE's expect, monitor, listen and understand, facilitate support, formalise support and enforce approach. Each stage builds on the last:

1. **Expect.** We set high expectations and make sure every family knows them.
2. **Monitor.** We check attendance daily and analyse it weekly, so that patterns are spotted early.
3. **Listen and understand.** When a pattern emerges, the class teacher or office speaks with parents, and the headteacher may write to or meet them to understand the barriers.
4. **Facilitate support.** We agree actions together, such as a morning check-in with a trusted adult, support from Rebecca Newsom, our school counsellor, adjustments to routines, or an Early Help referral.
5. **Formalise support.** If attendance does not improve, we agree a written attendance plan or parenting contract with clear actions, and may involve the Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS).
6. **Enforce.** Only where support has not worked, or is not appropriate, such as an unauthorised holiday, will we consider legal intervention (see section 9).

Reporting to parents

We share each child's attendance with parents at least 3 times a year, in November, February and July. We will also write to or meet parents whenever their child's attendance falls below 95%, or sooner if we are concerned.

8. Pupils who need extra support

Every pupil has the same right to a full-time education, and our attendance ambition is the same for every child. Some children face greater barriers and need more support to reach it.

Pupils with SEND, medical or mental health needs

- We work with the pupil, their family, our SENCO, Ms Findlay, and other professionals to understand the barriers and agree support.
- We consider reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil is disabled, and other adjustments to routines or policies where they would help. We record the adjustments considered, agreed and reviewed.
- We consider a time-limited phased return before other interventions, for example for a child who feels anxious about coming to school.
- Remote education is a last resort. It is used only after adjustments have been explored and as part of a written plan to return the pupil to school. A pupil learning remotely is still recorded as absent.
- Staff do not diagnose or treat health conditions, but we may ask for medical evidence to help us plan support (see section 5).
- Where a pupil with an Education, Health and Care plan has falling attendance, or barriers linked to their needs, we tell the Kent SEN team so the plan can be reviewed.
- Where a pupil will miss 15 school days or more in a year because of illness, consecutive or in total, we make a sickness return to the local authority, which has a duty to arrange suitable education.

Young carers

We work with the families of young carers to reduce the barriers caring creates. We record young carers in the school census and, where a child may need support, refer to Early Help or ask the local authority for a young carer's needs assessment.

Other pupils we watch closely

We monitor the attendance of pupils with a social worker, looked-after and previously looked-after children, pupils eligible for free school meals or the pupil premium, and pupils with SEND, and act quickly when it falls. For a looked-after child, we work with the Virtual School Head. Where a pupil with a social worker has unexplained or persistent absence, we tell their social worker.

Part-time timetables

A part-time timetable is used only in very exceptional cases, where it is in the pupil's best interests, for example to support a return after long illness. It must not be used to manage behaviour. It is agreed with parents, has a clear purpose, is reviewed regularly, has an end date, and is notified to the local authority. Registers are still taken at the same time as for all other pupils. A part-time timetable is different from flexi-schooling, which the school is not obliged to offer.

Returning after a long absence

Before a pupil returns after a long or unavoidable absence, the headteacher, SENCO, class teacher, parents and any professionals involved meet to agree the return date, any phased return, adjustments, and whether a risk assessment or individual healthcare plan is needed. Any phased return is as short as possible.

Persistent and severe absence

A pupil is persistently absent if they miss 10% or more of sessions, and severely absent if they miss 50% or more. Reducing both is central to our strategy. For these pupils, we:

- hold regular meetings with parents to discuss attendance, understand barriers, explain the help available and review progress
- agree a written attendance plan, involving KPAS, Early Help or other services where needed
- consider any safeguarding concerns, in line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education*
- for severe absence, work with the local authority on a joint plan, as these pupils are a priority for all services
- use legal intervention only where support is not engaged with or has not worked (see section 9)

9. Legal intervention and penalty notices

We use legal measures only where support has not worked, has not been engaged with, or is not appropriate, such as an unauthorised term-time holiday. Every case is considered individually.

The National Framework for Penalty Notices

The headteacher must consider a penalty notice when a pupil reaches the national threshold of **10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks**. The sessions do not need to be consecutive, and can span different terms or school years. A session is a morning or an afternoon, so 10 sessions equals 5 school days.

Unauthorised absence includes unauthorised holiday (G), other unauthorised absence (O) and arriving after the register has closed (U).

Before requesting a penalty notice, the headteacher will consider:

- whether all appropriate support has been offered
- whether a penalty notice is the best way to improve attendance for this pupil
- whether another legal intervention would be more appropriate
- whether our duties under the Equality Act 2010 make a penalty notice inappropriate
- that there are no safeguarding concerns that make a penalty notice inappropriate

How this works in Kent

- Penalty notices are issued by Kent County Council at the request of the headteacher, in line with the Kent Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.
- **Unauthorised holiday (G):** where the threshold is met, the school may request a penalty notice without a notice to improve, as support is not appropriate.
- **Other unauthorised absence (O and U):** the school first issues a **notice to improve**, giving parents a final chance to engage with support over an improvement period of 20 school days. A penalty notice may be requested if attendance does not improve.

- A penalty notice may also be issued if a parent allows their child to be in a public place during school hours, without reasonable justification, in the first 5 school days of a suspension or exclusion.
- A penalty notice is usually issued to each parent who allowed the absence. Where a parent has already received 2 penalty notices within 3 years, the school consults KPAS before taking further action.

Penalty notice amounts

Notice to the same parent for the same child, within 3 years	Amount
First	£80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days
Second	£160 if paid within 28 days
Third and subsequent	No penalty notice. Kent County Council will consider other action, which may include prosecution. For term-time holidays, this is through the Single Justice Procedure

Payment is made to Kent County Council. There is no right of appeal against a penalty notice. If it is not paid in full within 28 days, the local authority will decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

Notices to improve

A notice to improve sets out:

- the pupil's attendance record and the absences concerned
- the benefits of regular attendance and parents' duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- the support already offered, and further support available
- a clear warning that a penalty notice may be requested if attendance does not improve, and what sufficient improvement looks like
- the length of the improvement period, and the grounds on which a penalty notice may be requested before it ends

Other legal measures

Where support and penalty notices have not worked, the local authority may use an attendance contract, an education supervision order, a parenting order or prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Conviction can lead to a fine of up to £2,500 and, in the most serious cases, a community order or a prison sentence of up to 3 months.

10. Children missing education and leaving the school roll

A child going missing from education can be a sign of abuse, neglect or exploitation, so we act quickly when we do not know where a pupil is.

- If a pupil has been absent for 10 school days in a row without explanation, and we have not been able to make contact or find out where they are, we refer them to the Kent Children Missing Education team. We refer sooner if there are safeguarding concerns.
- We tell the local authority about any pupil who has been absent for 10 or more school days in a row with unauthorised absence, at least once a month.
- Parents who are moving house or changing school must tell the school office in writing, giving the new address, the new school and the start date.

- Parents who decide to educate their child at home must tell the headteacher in writing. We notify the local authority, and we encourage parents to talk to us first.
- A pupil's name is only removed from the admission register for one of the reasons set out in regulation 9 of the 2024 regulations. We tell the local authority whenever a pupil is removed from the roll outside the usual transition times, and inform any social worker or youth justice worker involved.
- When a pupil joins us outside the usual transition times, we tell the local authority within 5 school days.

11. Roles and responsibilities

Who	Responsibilities
Governing body	Promote the importance of attendance across the school's ethos and policies. Make sure leaders meet their statutory duties, including accurate registers and sharing data with the DfE and local authority. Review and challenge attendance data, focusing on the pupils and groups who need it most. Make sure staff and governors receive attendance training. Where attendance is a concern, agree an action plan with leaders. Hold the headteacher to account for this policy.
Headteacher, Senior Attendance Champion and attendance officer (Mr Tristan Wyatt-Hughes)	Lead and champion attendance, and set a clear vision for it. Make sure systems are followed by all staff. Oversee attendance data and report it to governors. Decide on leave of absence requests. Meet families, agree attendance plans and coordinate support with partners. Decide whether to issue a notice to improve or request a penalty notice. Tell the local authority when a pupil with an EHC plan has falling attendance.
Attendance Admin (Louise Bentley), supporting the attendance officer	Record absence reasons on Bromcom. Follow up unexplained absence on the first day. Produce weekly attendance reports for the headteacher. Flag emerging patterns, lateness and pupils approaching 95% and 90%. Prepare letters and records for meetings and legal processes. Liaise with KPAS.
SENCO (Mrs Findlay)	Help identify barriers to attendance linked to SEND. Plan and review reasonable adjustments and support. Link with the Kent SEN team when an EHC plan pupil's attendance falls.
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Consider attendance alongside other safeguarding information. Decide on welfare checks, home visits, Early Help and Children's Social Care referrals. Lead on children missing education.
Class teachers	Take the register accurately and on time, twice a day. Notice and share concerns about attendance, lateness or wellbeing. Welcome pupils back warmly after absence and help them catch up. Talk to parents about attendance as part of everyday contact.
School office staff	Take and record absence calls. Record late arrivals and early collections. Keep contact details up to date.
Parents and carers	Make sure their child attends every day, on time. Phone the school before 9.00am on each day of absence. Give at least 2 emergency contact numbers. Make appointments outside school hours where possible. Request leave of absence in advance. Work with the school and ask for help early.
Pupils	Attend every day, on time, ready to learn. Tell a trusted adult if something is making it hard to come to school.

"Parent" in this policy means all natural parents, anyone with parental responsibility, and anyone who has day-to-day care of the child.

12. Monitoring, data and review

How we use attendance data

- The office checks attendance daily. The headteacher reviews it weekly, looking at individual pupils, classes and groups, including lateness.

- Each half term, term and year, we analyse whole-school, class and group attendance, including pupils with SEND, pupils eligible for free school meals or the pupil premium, pupils with a social worker, looked-after children and young carers.
- We benchmark our data against similar schools, Kent, the South East and national figures, and use the DfE's monitoring tools through our shared Bromcom data.
- We identify pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence early, plan targeted support, and check whether it is working.
- We share data with class teachers, the SENCO and the DSL, so that everyone knows which children need support.
- We report attendance to governors at every Full Governing Body meeting and at Learning and Development committee meetings.

Training

All staff receive attendance training as part of their regular professional development, including why attendance matters, how to keep registers, and how absence can signal wider concerns. Staff with a specific attendance role receive additional training in data analysis. Governors receive training so they can challenge attendance data effectively.

Review

The headteacher reviews this policy annually, or sooner if national or Kent guidance changes. Each review is approved by the Full Governing Body.

Sources

- DfE: Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026)
- KELSI: Kent penalty notice process (KPAS)
- Kent County Council: Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct