

BREDHURST CHURCH OF ENGLAND (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

September 2024
(Review Date: September 2026)



BREDHURST VISION

To learn and grow through the guidance and love of God

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

At Bredhurst CE Primary we value diversity and promote equality of opportunity for all.

Religious education should enable every child to flourish and live life in all its fullness. (John 10:10)

It will help educate for dignity and respect, encouraging all to live well together.

OUR VISION

Our Vision is inspired by Matthew 13 : 31-32, The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Jesus said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31 - It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. 32 - Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."

The theology behind this parable is embedded across all our learning

OUR ETHOS

At Bredhurst, we aim to be proactive in helping each child to achieve the key elements to well-being in childhood and later life. These are:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well being

OUR CORE VALUES

The 'Spirit of Bredhurst' encompasses our core Christian values

- Self control
- Perseverance
- Inclusion
- Respect
- Inspiration
- Trust

These are displayed in each classroom, the entrance, the hall and the playground and are referred to regularly in Worship and in class lessons.

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

(Including KCC Penalty Notice Code of Conduct)

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Bredhurst CEP School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at Bredhurst CEP School.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8:55am. All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL STAFF

At Bredhurst CEP School there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The headteacher, Michelle Cox, has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher notifies Michelle Cox of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of Carol Sage (Attendance Officer) to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided by 10am an automated message will be sent via Bromcom to the parents. This will be followed by a phone call if no response.
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed every other term of the child's attendance figure in their report. They are also able to see and monitor their child's attendance daily via the MCAS App.

TIMELINE OF THE STAGED APPROACH FOR MANAGING POOR ATTENDANCE

- 95 - 100% attendance – the class teacher or form tutor to investigate and notify Michelle Cox of concerns. Michelle Cox to contact parent if appropriate.
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school may make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:-

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

LATENESS

At Bredhurst CEP School the register is taken at 8.55 am and 1:30 pm. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9:30 am and 1:45 pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

AUTHORISING ABSENCE

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (with some rare exceptions)

PENALTY NOTICES

LEGAL BASIS

Penalty notices may be issued to a parent as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. They can only be issued in relation to pupils of compulsory school age in maintained schools, pupil referral units, academy schools, AP academies and certain off-site places as set out in sections 444A(1)(b).

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

A penalty notice can only be requested by an authorised officer: that is, a headteacher or deputy or assistant head authorised by them. Kent County Council is the issuing authority.

The national framework for penalty notices is published in statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance'. It provides further national guidance on the operation of penalty notice schemes for school absence in England.

The education-related provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 apply to all parents who fall within the definition set out in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996. This defines 'parent' as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who, although they are not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is a parent in education law

Where difficulties arise with school attendance, professionals should take a 'support first' approach in line with the DfE's 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance, only resorting to legal enforcement is reduced by taking a supportive approach to tackle the barriers to attendance and intervening early before absence becomes entrenched.

The national framework for penalty notices is based on the principles that penalty notices should only be used in cases where:

- Support is not appropriate (e.g. a term time holiday) or where support has been provided and not engaged with or not worked, and
- They are the most appropriate tool to change parental behaviour and improve attendance for that particular child

WHEN MAY A PENALTY NOTICE FOR ABSENCE BE APPROPRIATE?

When the national threshold has been met: when a school becomes aware that the national threshold has been met, they must consider whether a penalty notice can and should be issued or not. The national threshold has been met when a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) within 10 school weeks¹, with one of, or a combination of the following codes:

- Code G (the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday or unauthorised leave of absence)
- Code O (none of the other rows of Table 3 in regulation 10(3) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2024 applies)
- Code U (the pupil attended after the taking of the register ended but before the end of the session, where no other code applies)

If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be the most appropriate tool. The national framework for penalty notices sets out that a maximum of 2 penalty notices per child, per parent can be issued within a rolling 3 year period. If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, another tool should be used. Kent County Council will consider applying for summons for prosecution in the Magistrates' Court for such cases.

For the purpose of the escalation process, previous penalty notices include those not paid (including where prosecution was taken forward if the parent pleaded or was found guilty) but not those which were withdrawn.

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 suspension or permanent exclusion. The school must have notified the parents of the days the pupil must not be present in a public place. This type of penalty notice is not included in the National Framework and therefore not subject to the same considerations about support being provided or count towards the limit as part of the escalation process in the case of repeat offences for non-attendance

¹ A school week means any week (Monday to Sunday) in which there is at least one school session. The 10 school-week period when the national threshold applies may 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).

NOTICE TO IMPROVE

A notice to improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a notice to improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support.

Kent schools will issue a notice to improve for parentally-condoned absence and unauthorised absence

It will not be necessary to issue a notice to improve for term time holidays or leave of absence

The Notice to improve must include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and details of the offences (a copy of the registration certificate should be included)
- The date range in which 10 or more unauthorised absences occurred
- The benefits of regular attendance and parents' duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support and the option to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued or prosecution considered if attendance improvement is not secured within the improvement period
- A clear timeframe for the 20 school day improvement period detailing to and from dates
- Details of what sufficient improvement within that timeframe will look like

At the end of an unsatisfactory monitoring period, schools may request a penalty notice to be issued if this is considered this is the best course of action to improve attendance. The referral should include evidence of support offered by the school prior to issuing the notice to improve. The notice to improve must comply with Department for Education requirements.

Kent County Council (as the issuing authority) will issue a penalty notice if all aspects of the Code of Conduct have been met and as the independent prosecutor, will check reasoning on whether a penalty notice should be issued or not, including whether sufficient support has been provided before issuing a penalty notice.

Kent County Council has stringent systems in place to record penalty notices issued in relation to each child to ensure that no more than 2 in 3 years are issued.

PAYMENT OF PENALTY NOTICE FINES

Arrangements for payment will be detailed within the Penalty Notice

- The first penalty notice issued to the parent for a child will be charged at £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid between days 22 and 28.
- Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first offence, the second notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 and is payable within 28 days. **There is no reduced sum available in this instance.**
- Part payments or payment plans are not acceptable and fines must be paid in full within 21 or 28 days, at the rate specified within the penalty notice.
- Payment after the deadline may be accepted in exceptional circumstances. In this situation, the higher amount of £160 is usually payable and must be paid immediately and in full.
- When paying a penalty notice fine, parents are essentially agreeing to an out of court settlement in respect of the unauthorised absences to which the notice refers. Payment in full against the penalty notice discharges the parent's legal responsibility for the period of unauthorised absence outlined in the Notice and the parent cannot be subsequently prosecuted for that period.
- Any revenues collected through the system must be ring-fence to administer the penalty notice system and prosecute for the original offence in cases of non-payment. If a surplus remains after the system has been administered and any not-payers have been prosecuted, this can be spent on the local authority's attendance support offer.
- When a third or subsequent period of unauthorised absence occurs during a 3 rolling year period and the school wish legal action to be considered, a penalty notice request should be made as usual including supporting documentation. Information regarding previous penalty notices should be provided if known.
- Kent County Council will not issue a penalty notice but will contact the Headteacher to request additional evidence. The matter will be considered for prosecution via the Single Justice Procedure. This process is only to be used for absence due to term-time holidays or unauthorised leave of absence. For instance where 2 penalty notices have been issued within a 3 year period for parentally condoned absence or persistent lateness after the register has closed, the school must consult with Kent PRU and Attendance Service.