



Attendance Policy

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

Date Approved	Summer 2023
Next Review Date	Summer 2024

Contents

1. Aims	3
2. Introduction and Statement of Intent	3
3. Legislation and guidance	4
4. Roles and responsibilities	5
5. Recording attendance.....	7
6. Authorised and unauthorised absence	10
7. Strategies for promoting attendance.....	13
8. Monitoring and Managing Attendance.....	13
Appendix 1: Attendance Codes.....	15
Appendix 2: Attendance Ladder.....	17

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 staff on registration procedures
- ensuring registers are accurately completed at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session
- promoting positive staff 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
- communicate 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 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

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.

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](#) 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](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE’s guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

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 Trust Board 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 Body will monitor the implementation of the policy and keep it under review, feeding back recommended changes to the Trust Board. 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 3 times a year, ensure that staff receive adequate training on attendance and hold the Headteacher at each school accountable for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher/Head of School 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/Head of School is responsible for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors, supporting staff 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.

School Name	Designated Senior Leadership Member
West Hill Primary Academy	Katy Ward
Temple Hill Primary Academy	Jaya Dillon
Riverview Infant School	Kerrie Ward
Riverview Junior School	Aaron Jones
Wrotham Road Primary School	Sarah Jack / Andy Bennett
Fleetdown Primary Academy	Vikki Coombes
Oakfield Primary Academy	Jill Gosbee
Culverstone Green Primary Academy	Nicola Guy
Meopham Community Academy	Charlotte Casey

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 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 call if no reason for absence has been provided
- appropriate attendance warning letters are sent out 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 including information on key vulnerable groups.

[School Office/Admin Staff](#) are expected to take accurate messages from parents and carers about absence and pass it 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 parents' 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 should regularly update the school and advise when the child is returning. Parents 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 7.

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 our 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 1 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 for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

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

School Name	Register AM	Register PM
West Hill Primary Academy	8.50–9.05am	Key Stage 1 – 12.30–12.40pm Key Stage 2 – 1.30–1.40pm
Temple Hill Primary Academy	8.50–9.05am (Nursery opens at 8.30am)	Reception, Years 1 and 2 – 1.10–1.25pm Years 3 and 4 – 1.25–1.40pm Years 5 and 6 – 1.40–1.55pm (Nursery opens at 12.30pm)
Riverview Infant School	8.55–9.05 am	1.15–1.25pm
Riverview Junior School	8.40am	Years 3 & 4 – 1.00–1.10pm Years 5 & 6 – 1.30–1.40pm
Wrotham Road Primary School	8.55–9.05am Nursery opens at 8.40am	Nursery 12.45 Reception 12.30 –12.40pm Years 1–3 – 1.15–1.25pm Years 4–6 – 1.30–1.40pm
Fleetdown Primary Academy	9.00–9.15am	Nursery and Reception – 12.45 – 1pm Years 1–4 – 12.55 – 1.10pm Years 5 & 6 – 1.15 – 1.30pm
Oakfield Primary Academy	8.55–9.10am (Nursery opens at 8.30am)	Nursery and Reception – 12:30–12.40pm Years 1–3 – 1:00–1.10pm Years 4–6 – 1.30 – 1.40pm
Culverstone Green Primary Academy	8.50–9am	Reception and Years 1–3 – 12.30–1.00pm Years 4–6 – 1.30–1.45pm
Meopham Community Academy	8.40–9am Nursery Sessions 8.30–11.30am	1.00–1.10pm Nursery Session 12.30–3.30pm

5.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer 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 7).

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

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/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/carers will be notified of this in advance.

5.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/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.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 for information regarding term-time absences the school can authorise.

5.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. Should a pupil arrive after the register has closed, they will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Persistent late arrival after the register has closed (coded "U") will be highlighted to parents and may result in a referral to KCC for a Penalty Notice or possible prosecution. See Section 6.2 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 parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason.

On Day 2 of absence, if no contact has been made, the school will once again telephone the parent or carer and all other emergency contacts and try other methods of communication to make contact e.g., text/email.

As part of our safeguarding procedures if the school are unable to contact a parent or carer, then on day 3 (or sooner if deemed necessary by the Designated Safeguarding Lead) 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. This may result in a referral being made to Social Services or other relevant authorities/external agencies.

If no contact is made within 10 days and our investigations still do not establish the whereabouts of the child, then a Child Missing Education (CME) form will be completed as per statutory requirements.

The school will maintain a log of First Day calls made and request written supporting evidence, or explanations, from parents or 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 5 days and/or where there are concerns about a child's attendance.

5.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels at parents' evenings, in reports and at meetings.

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.

From September 2013 the Department of Education amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Headteacher's ability to authorise absence for the purpose of a family holiday. Leave during term time can seriously disrupt a pupil's continuity of learning and is strongly discouraged by the Government, Governors and Headteacher/Head of School.

Therefore, family holidays are expected to be taken during the school holidays. There is no parental entitlement to take children on holiday during term-time. Term and school holiday dates are published a year in advance to assist with booking holidays outside of term-time. The Headteacher/Head of School will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher/Head of School's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

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

If you wish to make a request to remove a pupil from school during term time you will need to make an application in writing to the Headteacher/Head of School at the earliest opportunity (preferably four weeks in advance) and before any arrangements are made. The application must clearly state the length of absence, must include a return date and the reason for absence. Supporting documents/evidence must be submitted at the time of making the application.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm where there is a query, or check the calendar of religious festivals to identify the set days for agreed religious observance, for example [the SHAP calendar](#). Absence will not be authorised on a school day for a festival falling at a weekend or school holiday. Additional days taken on either side of the date not explicitly set aside for observance will not be authorised on the grounds of religious observance.
- Traveller pupils 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.

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

If the leave of absence is agreed by the Headteacher/Head of School the absence will be marked as authorised (Code H). Where parents and/or 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 10 sessions or more (5 days) can result in a referral to Kent County Council and a fixed penalty notice may be issued (See section 5.2). Children who do not return to school for 10 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 ([Children Missing Education, DFE Guidance](#)).

6.2 Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are those which the Headteacher/Head of School 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 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, parent being ill or looking after a family relative.
- Preparation/revision for School Selection Tests
- Family holidays that have not been granted by the academy 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 off as a “precaution”, the school will always monitor your child and call you if they become poorly.

Sometimes children can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best solved between the school, the parents/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 into 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 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine or prosecute parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 per child within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

Non-payment of a Penalty Notice may result in prosecution under the provisions of Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 or prosecution under Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Penalty notices are issued in accordance with [Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct](#).

7. Strategies for promoting attendance

The Trustees, Governors, Executive Headteacher/Headteacher/Head of School and staff 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 use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The schools will advise parents 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. Monitoring and Managing Attendance

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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letter 1 - advise attendance is getting low and will be closely monitored and will need to improve.• Letter 2 - will advise attendance has not improved and will advise that all subsequent absences will need to be supported by medical evidence and/or invited to a meeting.• Letter 3 - if no improvement referral to the local authority. <p>For cases that require intensive family support, the school may discuss with the parent or care about making a referral to Early 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.</p>

<p>Below 90%</p>	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Local Authority action may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 social services or contact other agencies such as housing or the police.

Appendix 1: 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
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time, a maximum of 10 school days)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend (Phasing for Reception pupils only)
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Attendance Ladder

