



Greenvale Primary School

Headteacher: Mrs A Allnutt

SYMONS AVENUE, CHATHAM, KENT, ME4 5UP

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9th September 2024

Dear Parents/Carers

New DfE statutory attendance guidance - 'Attendance Counts'

There has been growing national concern regarding declining school attendance rates across the UK. In response, the Department for Education has introduced new statutory guidance, effective from August 2024, aimed at reducing term-time holidays and unauthorised absences, and supporting families whose children are struggling to attend.

'Support First'

As the DfE notes, '*Improving attendance is everyone's business*', and it is important that we, as your child's school, work together in partnership with you, your family, your child, and the wider community.

The new 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' guidance emphasises a 'Support First' ethos, and recognises that '*the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. It is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.*'

If you are concerned about your child's attendance, then please contact the school as soon as possible so that barriers to attendance can be understood, and appropriate support can be put in place to support you, your family, and your child to prevent further absences.

Telephone: 01634 409521

Email: office@greenvale.medway.sch.uk

Absence can also be reported on the ParentMail app

Our school day timings

The school day starts at 8.45am and ends at 3.15pm.

Class doors are open from 8.30am and pupils must arrive in school, ready for the register to be taken by 8.45am each day. **The doors will close promptly at 8.45am. This includes Nursery as late arrivals cause disruption to pupils learning.**

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45am and will be kept open until 8.50am (pupils arriving between 8.45am and 8.50am will be marked as 'late').

Any pupil arriving after 8.50am will be given a U code that is equivalent to an unauthorised absence mark for that session.

The register for the second session will be taken at 12.45pm for Key Stage One and will be kept open until 12.50pm. The register for the second session for Key Stage Two will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1.05pm.

Medical evidence

In the majority of cases a parent's notification that their child is too ill to attend school will be evident and can be accepted without question or concern. Only where the school has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness will medical evidence be requested to support the absence and when attendance is a cause for concern, evidence will also be requested to authorise absence/s.

Formalising and intensifying the support

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, we will work with partners, including the local authority, to formalise and intensify the support.

As part of the measures introduced, if a pupil has 10 sessions of absence within a 10-week period, the pupil's parent(s)/carer(s) may receive a 'Notice to Improve' notification sent via email or letter. Each day of absence is recorded as two sessions (morning and afternoon). Unauthorised absences include:

- unauthorised absence (where there is no reasonable circumstance for the absence taking place, O code),
- arriving late after the register has closed (U Code)

- or a combination of these with holidays taken during term time (Unauthorised holiday – G code)

These 10 weeks can span different terms and even different educational settings, such as transitions in-year school changes and alternative provision. For instance, if your child misses 3 days of school for a holiday in September (6 sessions) and is late after the register closes on 4 occasions (4 sessions) between September and October, you may be issued a 'Notice to Improve' notification.

The 'Notice to Improve' notification will set out the expectations and period notice for the improvement of attendance such as 'no further unauthorised absences'. Should the expectations not be met in the improvement period, then a Penalty Notice may then be requested by the school and issued by the Local Authority (LA) to each parent/carer responsible for the child.

Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice. In this instance, a 'Notice to Improve' notification **will not** be issued beforehand.

The penalty notice amount is increasing from August 2024 with a maximum of two penalty notices within a rolling three-year period:-

- **First offence** - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child paid within 21 days. This increases to £160 per parent, per child if paid after day 21, until day 28. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

- **Second Offence (within 3 years)** - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

- **Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)** - the third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) or other legal interventions considered. The Magistrates' Court can order fines up to £2500 per parent, per child.

Parents with parental responsibility, and adults residing with the child, including for example, step-parents who have day-to-day responsibility for the child, may be fined, and this applies to each child who is absent. For example, if two adults take two children out of school, the total fines would be £640 (reduced to £320 for a first offence paid within 21 days).

If a Penalty Notice is not paid within the time limits set out in the letter to the parent, the Local Authority may proceed the case to court.

We recognise that these Penalty Notices may be unpopular with families, but it is important to inform you of these changes promptly.

Nationally, Headteachers are:

- not permitted to approve term-time holidays except in genuinely exceptional circumstances, and
- are to consider each application for a leave of absence individually before making our decision.

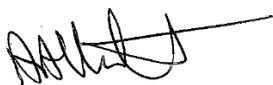
The law clearly expects Headteachers to enforce these penalties strictly.

The new policy also states that all schools must consider issuing Penalty Notices if the criteria is met. This is a national statutory process and will be followed by all English state funded schools.

Our revised school attendance policy in line with these requirements can be found here on the school website: <https://www.greenvale.medway.sch.uk> from Monday 9th September 2024.

The primary goal of these measures is to ensure that children do not miss out on their education. Every lesson is a crucial part of your child's learning journey, and frequent absences can significantly hinder their progress. Thank you for your continued cooperation in supporting your child's education.

Yours sincerely



Mrs A Allnutt
Headteacher

