MAIDSTONE GRAMMAR SCHOOL
FOUNDED 1549

Attendance Policy 2023

Key Contacts
Miss R Johnson, Deputy Head Pastoral
Mrs M Spendley, Attendance & Inclusion Manager

Ratified by Governors September 2022

To be reviewed annually

1. Statement of Intent

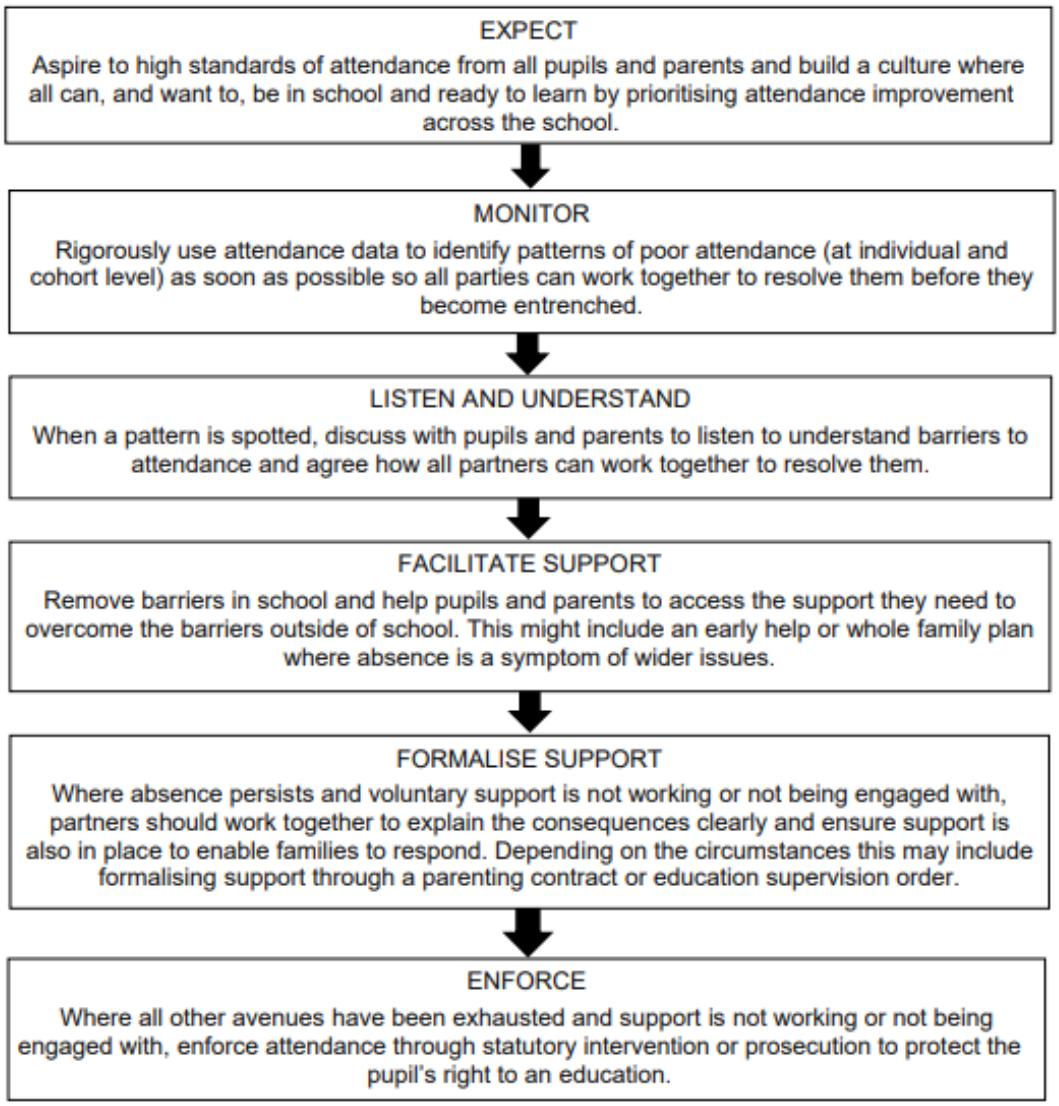
Maidstone Grammar School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our students.

Good attendance and punctuality is essential for students to be successful and to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. Poor attendance and punctuality undermine a student's education, adversely affect progress and can put a student at risk from a safeguarding point of view.

Improving attendance is everyone's business - we undertake to work in partnership with parents to support good attendance and punctuality and resolve attendance problems because every lesson counts. Where appropriate we will also engage support from external agencies to help us.

As a school our expectation is that students will achieve attendance at 95% or above and excellent punctuality.

2.The DFE Attendance Guidance (2022) outlines school's responsibilities with regards to attendance as below:



3. Summary of School Action in relation to Attendance

Percentage:	School Action:	Actions may include one or more of the following:
95-100%	**Prevention**	• **Attendance Policy on school website** • **Assemblies** • **SLT/ Duty staff on School Gates meet and greet students supporting good punctuality and attendance on a daily basis.** • **Morning and afternoon registration for all students / engagement with the form tutor** • **Lesson by lesson registration – all students and teachers** • **Parental access to attendance information via Talaxy** • **School / Home communication regarding absences** • **If deemed appropriate by the school, sanctioning for punctuality concerns.** • **Other as deemed appropriate by the school**
90-95%	**Early Intervention-** **Students with attendance between 90% and 95% are at risk of persistent absence.**	• **Morning and afternoon registration for all students / support from the form tutor.** • **SLT/ Duty staff on School Gates meet and greet students supporting good punctuality and attendance on a daily basis.** • **Lesson by lesson registration – all students and staff** • **Pastoral Tracking and Monitoring through the Cause for Concern Process with agreed actions on a case by case basis.** • **Head of House / Assistant Head of House interventions.** • **If deemed appropriate by the school, sanctioning for punctuality concerns.** • **Other as deemed appropriate by the school**
Less than 90%	**Targeted** **Attendance below 90% = persistent absence**	• **Morning and afternoon registration for all students / support from the form tutor.** • **SLT/ Duty staff on School Gates meet and greet students supporting good punctuality and attendance on a daily basis.** • **Lesson by lesson registration – individual monitoring** • **Pastoral Tracking and Monitoring through the Cause for Concern Process with agreed actions on a case by case basis.** • **Head of House / Assistant Head of House interventions which may include:** • **Pastoral support for student - understanding barriers / identifying patterns** • **Parental meetings with parents / carers** • **Report / Attendance + Punctuality report overseen by designated member of staff**

		• **Counselling / MIND referral if appropriate** • **Sanctioning, where deemed appropriate by the school, for ongoing attendance / punctuality concerns** • **Consideration of Part time timetable (in exceptional circumstances) to support reintegration to school / improved attendance** • **Involvement of the Local Authority School Liaison Officer (Attendance)** • **Involvement of Early Help / Children's Social Services/ other agencies** • **Referral to local authority offsite provision (students with health needs)** • **Other as deemed appropriate by the school** • **In addition, while the school prefers to work collaboratively and supportively with parents it may, in exceptional circumstances, issue Fixed Penalty Notices or work with the Local Authority Attendance Service to make use of formal support options including parenting contracts, education supervision orders or legal intervention.**

4. The Role of School Staff

The following provides an indication of key roles and responsibilities within the school.

Role	Responsibility	Including
Headmaster	Whole School	Overall Accountability
Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)	Whole School- prevention, early intervention and targeted support	Safeguarding and Pastoral Lead including Attendance Oversight SENCo -Attend Cause for Concern Meetings and formulate actions -Liaise with Attendance Officer and key pastoral staff -Liaise with Local Authority School Liaison Officer and Inclusion Team -Liaising with external agencies / overseeing referrals - -Oversee appropriate interventions in relation to attendance concerns. -Parental contacts / meetings
Assistant Headteachers	Oversight of Key Stage- prevention, early intervention and targeted support	Attendance and Punctuality monitoring (key stage) including: -Attend Cause for Concern Meetings and formulate actions

		-Liaise with Attendance Officer /Deputy Head -Liaising with external agencies -Organisation of reduced timetables -Parent contacts / meetings
Heads of House / Assistant Heads of House	Oversight of Year 7-13 students in the House- prevention, early intervention and targeted support	Attendance and Punctuality monitoring (House) including: -Attend Cause for Concern Meetings and formulate actions -Liaise with Attendance Officer/ Deputy Head -Liaising with external agencies -Organisation of reduced timetables -Parent contacts / meetings
Attendance and Inclusion Manager / Attendance Staff	Whole School- prevention, early intervention and targeted support	-Data and reporting -Daily attendance calls -Attendance coding -Attendance and punctuality analysis and actions -Parent letters and communications in relation to attendance -Reporting of reduced timetables to LA -Liaison with Deputy Head and members of the pastoral team. -Attend Cause for Concern meetings and formulate actions -Liaise with Local Authority School Liaison Officer -Represent the school at Attendance meetings -Liaising with internal and external agencies including supporting the referral process
Form Tutors	Prevention	-Registering students in a timely manner -Ensure registers are up to date and accurate -Delivering key attendance messages -Identify and report any concerns or noteworthy patterns -Attendance conversations with individual students
Teachers	Prevention	-Registering students in a timely manner every lesson -Ensure registers are up to date and accurate -Identify and report any concerns or noteworthy patterns -parental contacts where required

		-Providing work for students where required by Deputy Head/ Assistant Head of Head of House.

5. The Role of the Student

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure they arrive in school on time and are present every day.

All students in Year 7-13 are required to arrive on time at their form room for statutory morning registration (8.40am) and statutory afternoon registration (1.55pm) every day.

Registers are open from 8.40 – 8.45am at morning registration and 1.55-2pm at afternoon registration.

All students must attend all timetabled lessons; lesson by lesson electronic registration will be taken for all classes.

Students may occasionally be unwell or late to school, but should take all reasonable steps to avoid this and not behave in a manner that increases the frequency of non attendance or lateness.

Any student in Year 7-13 who arrives late to school after morning registration must sign in at the Attendance Office immediately on arrival (School House). Students arriving up until 9am will be marked in as late (L). Students arriving late after 9am without an agreed reason will be marked as an unauthorised late (U).

In the afternoon, students arriving between 2pm and 2.15pm will be marked late (L).

Students who accumulate lateness without an agreed reason will be required to make up the time through the school's sanction system.

All students in Year 7-11 are required to remain on site throughout the whole school day unless permission has been granted by the school, in which case they must sign out at the Attendance Office or front Reception before leaving the site.

In the Sixth Form, students will be permitted to leave the site during free periods once the Sixth Form Home School Agreement has been signed by student / parent AND permission has been granted by SLT (which will usually be from after Christmas in Year 12).

Year 13 students are permitted to leave the site during free periods.

SLT reserves the right to remove off site privileges at any time for Sixth Form students including for academic underperformance and / or conduct concerns.

All Sixth Form students must wear their lanyard with photo ID at all times when on site so that they can be identified as members of the school community. They must always present the Lanyard at the electronic reader when signing in or out during the school day for safeguarding reasons.

6. The Role of the Parent / Carer

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have.
It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance

A person begins to be of compulsory school age —

(a) when he attains the age of five, if he attains that age on a prescribed day, and
(b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following his attaining that age.

Prescribed days are 31 August, 31 December and 31 March

A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year (the last Friday in June) —

(a) if he attains the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
(b) if he attains that age on that day, or
(c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following his attaining that age.

at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.
Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.
Parents are also expected to support the school in ensuring their child's good punctuality.

7.Punctuality

Good punctuality is very important.
The school day starts at 8.40am. All students are expected to arrive at their form room no later than 8.40am for **morning registration from 8.40am to 8:45am**.

Students arriving after 8.45am must report to the Attendance Office (School House) to sign in and give the reason for their lateness.

All students must attend **afternoon registration from 1.55pm-2pm** and stay for form time. Students arriving between 2.00 and 2.15 will be marked as late (L) by their tutor.

The school carries out regular monitoring of punctuality and attendance, including through its Cause for Concern meetings six times per year. Students who have been late without an agreed reason will be required to make up this time through the school sanction system.

Where there are ongoing concerns in relation to lateness, the school will communicate with parents and seek to work with them to address this. Frequent lateness after the morning register has closed could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

8.Absence from School

The 2 reasons a student can miss school are:

- The student is too ill to go to school
- the school has authorised the student to be absent.

The Attendance Office will text or email home on a daily basis for those pupils who are absent but whose parents /carers have not made contact with the school. Further contact will be made by the Attendance Office or other pastoral staff where concerns persist.

Absence (leave) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances".

Parents cannot authorise absence – only the school.

In relation to one day leave of absence requests which are declined, parents can appeal to the Deputy Head (pastoral).

In relation to leave of absence / holiday requests of more than one day which are declined, parents can appeal to the Headmaster.

In all cases, the Headmaster will have the final decision.

9.Authorised Absence due to illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term. For illness (and any other absence that has not previously been agreed by the school), parents must inform the school at the earliest opportunity as described below:

It is the responsibility of the parent to contact the school on the first day their child is absent <u>AND</u> on each successive day before 9am for safeguarding reasons. To do this parents should EITHER:

- **Telephone the MGS Absence Line on: 01622 623922**

Out of hours, parents will hear a recorded message inviting them to leave the following information:

-Child's Name
-Form Group
-Reason for Absence
-Expected Date of Return (if known); if unknown, please communicate daily until your child returns to school.

OR:
Email Attendance on: Attendance@mgs.kent.sch.uk
Contact details can also be found on the school website at: https://mgs.kent.sch.uk/attendance/
Information about the reason for each absence is always required, either in writing, by email or via a telephone message to the MGS Absence Line. Parents should explain the nature of illness, not just say 'illness' or 'unwell' or a signed appointment card or prescription/medicine label can be provided where medical attention has been sought.

10.Authorised Absences- including medical and dental appointments during the school day

Parents are asked to keep to a minimum the occasions when students miss all or part of the school day (e.g. by endeavouring to arrange medical, dental, optician appointments outside school hours or during school holidays).

When medical and dental appointments cannot be arranged for outside school hours, permission for absence should be requested by letter or email in advance via the Attendance email: **Attendance @mgs.kent.sch.uk**
Where permission is granted the student will be required to sign out before leaving the school site at the either the Front Reception or The Attendance Office (School House) for safeguarding purposes. Students returning school during the day must sign back in.

11.Authorised Absence- One day requests for a Family Event or Off Site Educational Event

Parents should seek permission in advance for a single day leave of absence for a family event such as a wedding, christening or funeral. The school's expectation is that for family events such as these, only a single day of leave will be granted. If, however, additional travelling time is needed then please explain this when completing the leave of absence e-form. To request an extraordinary leave of absence for a family event parents must complete the e-form on the school website at: https://mgs.kent.sch.uk/attendance/

This should be submitted two weeks prior to the planned event where possible.

Certain educational off site activities such as university visits, educational interviews, representative sporting fixtures, representative musical performances can help a student to develop their skills and become a well rounded individual. However, it should not be expected that participation will automatically be authorised by the school. The specific nature of the event as well as overall attendance, academic progress and attainment and conduct may all be taken into consideration when deciding whether to authorise absence.
Please note that absence requests will only be authorised for driving tests not driving lessons.

To request an extraordinary leave of absence for an educational activity parents must complete the e-form on the school website at https://mgs.kent.sch.uk/attendance/ This should be submitted two weeks prior to the planned event where possible.

12.Leave of Absence - Holidays during term time

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Headteacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday.
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 leave (the school has given permission)
- 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

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

All requests for holiday will be considered individually, but the default position is that it will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances which warrant special consideration as follows:

- Proof can be provided that the parent's own annual leave can only be taken during term time (e.g. a letter from the employer)

Or

- There are exceptional compassionate circumstances for example, bereavement or terminal illness within the family.

Holidays which have been accidentally booked during the term time or which have been booked during the term time to take advantage of cheaper booking rates are not considered exceptional circumstances and will not be authorised.

If the criteria are not met then the holiday will not be authorised. The DfE's G code will be used: family holiday not agreed or days in excess of agreement.

13.Unauthorised Absences

An absence will not be authorised where the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence or where no explanation has been received.

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

● Persistent non-specific 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, theatre trips or "days out"
● Family Holidays (unless the school considers there are exceptional circumstances)

Where there are concerns in relation to attendance, the school will communicate with parents and seek to work with them to address this. See Section 3 above.

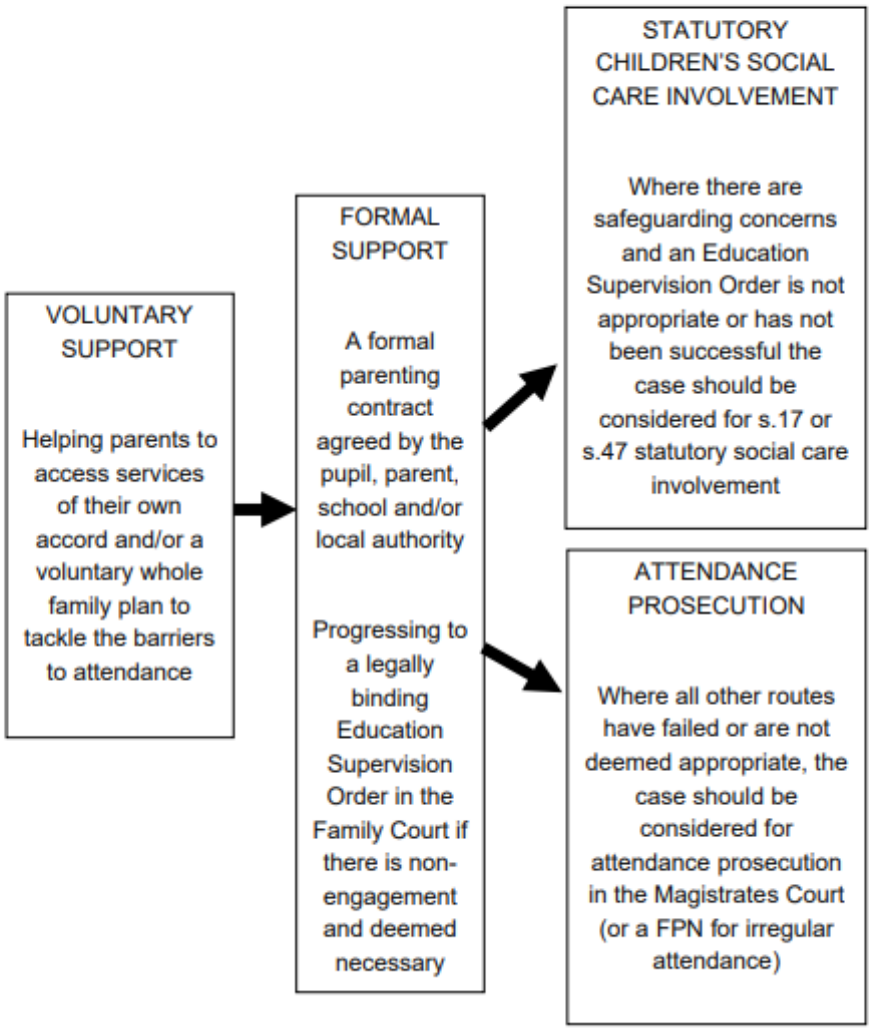
14.Child Missing From Education (CME)

No child may be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher (or Deputy acting on their behalf) and the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service. This applies to children with ten (or more) consecutive days of unauthorised (unknown) absence and:

- Children who are moving abroad / away from the area
- Children who are transferring to a different school (if no official confirmation from the new school is received)
- Children who fail to attend the new academic year/ term (particularly at points of transition)
- Children who suddenly stop attending school
- Children who are removed by their parents for a range of reasons

15.Legal Intervention

The DFE Attendance Guidance outlines the Legal Action with regards to school attendance:



Persistent unauthorised absence (attendance below 90%) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing. When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all emails and letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings will be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information. Local Authority Action may include:

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- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

At MGS we aim to work with parents to promote / improve attendance without recourse to Penalty Notices as a sanction; however, we do not rule these out.

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016:

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of persistent unauthorised absence or where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- Absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive.
- The PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.