

Kent  
Catholic  
Schools'  
Partnership



'Academies in Christ'  
Part of the Archdiocese of Southwark

# St Thomas' Catholic Primary Attendance Policy

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## 1. Statement of Intent

The Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership ("the Trust") 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. We expect pupils to attend regularly and punctually and we actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils, including those in the 6<sup>th</sup> form.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote 100% attendance and good punctuality.

The Governing Body, Headteacher/Principal and Staff in partnership with parents / carers have a duty to promote full attendance at the academy. Staff at the academy must monitor the attendance of each individual pupil from a safeguarding perspective and it is the legal duty of parents / carers to ensure their child attends school daily.

Our academy will give a high priority to conveying to parents / carers and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents / carers have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance. If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents / carers and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

## 2. Principles

The academy will:

- ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures when necessary and receive in-service training on registration regulations and education law
- complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and during the afternoon session
- stress to parents / carers the importance of contacting appropriate academy staff early on the first day of absence
- display attendance rates in our newsletter and reward good or improved attendance for pupils
- promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence
- consult with all members of the school community and the Director of School Improvement in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy
- ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by senior managers who will report to school governors
- work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that, if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed
- monitor and investigate any patterns of lateness or absence

## 3. Procedures

If no contact is received from the parents / carers of an absent pupil by the first day of absence the Attendance Officer will:

- contact parent/carer by telephone or text, or if parent is unavailable, consider sending a standard letter requesting information and/or telephone other contacts held on SIMS

- discuss concerns with the academy's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) if no response is received after 2 days of absence. SLT will arrange to contact the parent by telephone or by conducting a home visit in order to ascertain the reason for non-attendance
- when a pupil's attendance percentage reaches 96.1% for primary academies and 95.1% for secondary academies, and a pattern of unauthorised absence is emerging, the following procedures will be implemented:
  - 96.1% primary / 95.1% secondary attendance - send letter 1 (see appendix A)
  - 95% primary / 94% secondary attendance - send letter 2 (see appendix A). SLT to contact parent either by telephone or by conducting a home visit
  - 94% primary / 93% secondary attendance - send Penalty Notice Warning Letter if there are four or more unauthorised sessions (see appendix A)
  - Below 93% attendance:
    - apply for Penalty Notice where there are 10 unauthorised sessions in 100 sessions
    - consider School Attendance Meeting
    - send letter advising of PA threshold also offering support (see Appendix A)
    - if further unauthorised absence is recorded, SLT to discuss possible prosecution with PIAS
- help the pupil's re-integration where a pupil is returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks
- notes, records of telephone calls, and medical evidence should be dated, named and initialled by the office staff/FLO, Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher/Principal.

In order to ensure the success of this policy every member of the academy staff will convey to the pupils that attendance is a crucial part of their education.

#### 4. Performance

We will review our progress against National Attendance Targets. We will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process. When evaluating success, the academy will consider whether or not:

- attendance has improved
- punctuality has improved
- parental response to absences has improved
- the academy has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the academy, Governing Body and the local community
- pupils are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within the academy
- attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies, Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons, or as a theme for any other lessons/assemblies.

#### 5. Practice

The academy will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- keeping and maintaining registers accurately (see Attendance Codes)
- maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers
- carefully and accurately inputting data into the SIMs Attendance module
- regularly analysing attendance data
- ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance
- liaising closely with the academy's School Liaison Officer (SLO)
- rewarding excellent attendance.

## 6. Keeping the Register

### The Status of the Register

The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately, neatly and, if not linked directly to SIMS, marked in ink if completed by hand. The register (from SIMS Attendance) may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It may also contribute data to pupils' end of term reports, to records of achievement, and to leavers' references. It is vital that pupils are aware that registration is a significant part of the school day. We will ensure that all staff involved with the registration process are aware that the law is very specific regarding the keeping of registers. Marking and keeping the register is of the utmost importance.

### Marking the Register

- no pupil will be marked present unless actually in the room when the register is called or unless he or she has been given permission to be absent by the registering teacher
- registers are finally closed at an agreed time each day 9:20am and 1:30pm
- where a pupil misses registration but arrives before 9:20am with an adequate explanation s/he should be marked as late. Lateness must be explained by a parent/carer when a pupil is marked late in the morning
- where a pupil misses registration and arrives after 9:20am s/he should be marked as late after the register i.e. unauthorised absence – U
- pupils must not mark the register under any circumstances
- spaces must not be left on the register
- the data from the registers will be input to SIMs Attendance at the end of each week as a minimum and a percentage attendance report produced and monitored
- the decision to authorise an absence will be made within a maximum of two weeks from the date of the absence.

## 7. Removal from Roll

Pupils will only be removed from the academy's roll and class registers under the following circumstances:

- the academy is replaced by another academy / school on a School Attendance Order
- the School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- completion of compulsory school age
- permanent exclusion
- death of the pupil
- transfer between academies / schools
- pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- failure to return from an extended family holiday after both the academy and SLO / Education Welfare Officer (EWO) have tried to locate the pupil
- a medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the academy before ending compulsory school age
- in custody for more than four months
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the school and SLO / EWO have tried to locate the pupil.

It is not lawful to remove a pupil from a school roll simply because the pupil has a poor attendance record.

## 8. Analysis of Attendance Data

Analysis will help to draw attention to deterioration or improvement and target intervention more selectively and help to establish the cause of an absence. Whole school attendance figures should be produced weekly and analysed termly and yearly, this process will indicate factors such as the effect of seasonal attendance e.g. attendance may decline in the colder months and preceding school holidays.

Weekly figures may illustrate:

- the fall in attendance preceding staff development days, half terms, end of terms
- the effect of ending terms on a Monday or Tuesday
- the effect of activity days, day trips, or residential trips
- the effect of pupil holidays in term time.

Reports from SIMs Attendance will indicate these and other patterns of absence.

## 9. Types of Absence

### **Authorised absences**

Only the academy can authorise an absence. Parents / carers and the Local Authority do not have the power to authorise absences.

*THE KEY POINTS THAT WE CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING TO AUTHORISE ABSENCE ARE:*

- it is a legal requirement that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually
- academies are not obliged to accept a parental explanation for pupil absence
- Headteacher/Principal may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteacher/Principal in consultation with the SLO / EWO should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
- academies should always expect regular and punctual attendance, even when the academy is aware of family difficulties. Looking after siblings or a sick parent, shopping or going on a trip will not be acceptable reasons for absence
- medical evidence is required when attendance reaches 95% and if this is not provided by the parent / carer, the absence should be treated as unauthorised
- where absence is authorised, academies should remain vigilant to emerging patterns of non-attendance
- lateness should be actively discouraged and persistent lateness treated in the same way as irregular attendance
- academies should develop a close working relationship with the SLO / EWO in order to promote regular school attendance.

### **Unauthorised absences**

Unauthorised absence is absence without approval from an authorised representative of the academy and includes all unexplained absences.

If a child is absent with the approval of the academy, for whatever reason, no offence is deemed to have been committed.

Academies need to exercise caution in the authorisation of absence. If no medical evidence is provided by parents / carers once attendance has reached 95%, the absence may be further investigated and left unauthorised.

The decision taken by the academy to authorise absence or not, is of critical importance in determining the level of involvement of the SLO / EWO. If the academy has authorised a pupil's absence, in effect leave has been given and there is no case in law for the parents / carers to answer.

### **Parentally condoned absence**

This form of absence is equally as damaging to the pupil's educational experience as any other form of absence. It is essential that, when academy staff feel that a worrying pattern of non-attendance is emerging they inform the Headteacher/Principal who will work closely with other staff and the educational, social and health support services to ensure that the most appropriate and effective intervention is available to the pupil and parents / carers. There is a range of specialist support services, which will assist and advise academies and parents / carers on ways forward when these difficulties arise.

### **Lateness**

A pupil's punctuality is a legal requirement and the parents / carers of a pupil who is persistently late are guilty of an offence. The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents / carers can be prosecuted if late arrival is not resolved. Pupils who arrive late disrupt not only their own education but that of others and being persistently late may also lead to truancy. Poor punctuality may indicate problems within the pupil's home which the pupil may need help to deal with. For some pupils, arriving punctually may be beyond their control. Often lateness is a result of a lack of firm parenting; the child is confused and often left to cope alone, sometimes at a very young age. There needs to be a careful balance struck between being too punitive and too accepting of a pupil's lateness. Once the reasons for lateness have been established, the parents / carers, pupil and academy need to work in partnership to resolve the difficulties.

The register closes at **9:00am** if a child arrives between **8:50am** and **9:20am** they are marked in as 'late'. If they arrive after this time they are marked in as having an 'unauthorised absence'. For Health and Safety purposes, they will be recorded as being on the premises in the Late Book.

### **Following up Absence**

All pupil absence will be followed up as soon as possible (see appendix A for flow chart). The action taken, and the responses received, will always be recorded. Parents / carers are informed through the academy's prospectus, and in newsletters that a text will be sent, whenever possible, on the morning of the child's first day of absence. This will immediately be recorded in the office.

Where a child returns and a reason for absence has not been provided by the parent either by telephone or written note the academy may send a standard letter.

## **10. The Role of the Headteacher/Principal**

The Headteacher/Principal is responsible for following up absences but may delegate this responsibility to the Attendance Officer and / or another member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The Headteacher/Principal:

- delegates the maintenance of weekly running totals to the academy secretaries/Attendance Officer/Deputy Headteacher/other appropriate member of staff

- checks attendance reports regularly
- reports issues regarding absence, including trends of attendance to the Trust School Improvement Advisers through termly visits and to the Governing Body through Headteacher/Principal reports to GB meetings
- reports to the Trust Board of Directors and outside agencies when necessary.

## 11. Family Holidays in Term Time

### **The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006**

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#). These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013.

#### **Term-time holiday**

The [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) currently allow Headteachers/Principals to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in “exceptional circumstances” of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers/Principals can also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Headteachers/Principals may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher/Principal [in consultation with the EWO] should determine the number of school days a child can be away from the academy if the leave is granted.

DfE guidelines clearly state that the reference to exceptional circumstances means that the parent must make a strong case for leave of absence during term time.

The Headteacher/Principal will consider each request for leave of absence individually and this must be put in writing addressed to the Headteacher/Principal stating the reason for the request. The academy does not operate a ‘blanket approval’ policy for requests. The following factors should be considered when assessing requests - no one factor should be regarded as conclusive:

- the time of year of proposed leave of absence
- the length and purpose of the leave of absence
- the impact on continuity of learning
- the circumstances of the family
- the overall attendance pattern of the child. A 10 day leave of absence in term time reduces overall attendance to 94.7%. This is without taking into account any absence through illness.

Leave of absence for more than two weeks is also seen as exceptional. The Headteacher/Principal will carefully explore with parents / carers why such leave of absence is necessary. Where such absences are sanctioned, they will be counted as an authorised absence.

Where parents / carers fail to abide by the agreement reached with the academy and keep a child away from school in excess of the period agreed or, where parents / carers fail to apply for permission, this will be treated as an unauthorised absence.



In order to ensure that the negative impact of leave of absence is minimised, applications for leave of absence will not be considered in the following periods or circumstances:

- During the first term of a new academic year
- In SATs week/s for all KS2 pupils and during SATs week/s for Year 2 pupils (dates will be published in advance)
- In Y10 and Y11
- Where attendance is below 96% for primaries / 95% for secondaries unless there are exceptional circumstances.

## **Religious Observance**

The Trust acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside academy holiday periods or weekends. The regulations around religious observance (coded R) are as follows. The academy must authorise any absence where the child or parent/carer's religious organisation sets the day as a religious festival. The academy should check the calendar of religious festivals to identify the set days for agreed religious observance, for example the SHAP calendar: [www.shapworkingparty.org.uk/](http://www.shapworkingparty.org.uk/). However, absence linked to the religious festival (such as visiting families or travelling) or an absence that is of a religious nature (ceremony or ritual), but is not a calendared festival, such as circumcision or a threading ceremony, is not covered by the R code and is subject to the Headteacher/Principal's discretion like any other approval for exceptional leave of absence.

Academies will submit a request to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence from the academy for any families taking holidays in unauthorised periods, or for ten or more school sessions (equivalent to 5 school days).

## **12. Referral to the Education Welfare Officer**

The vast majority of referrals to the EWO are made on the basis of non-attendance and are made when:

- a) a pattern of irregular attendance has developed
- b) a period of non-attendance has been established
- c) letters sent by the academy have met with little or no response
- d) there is a lack of co-operation in ensuring the child's regular attendance
- e) a parent/carer withdraws a pupil without securing the means of alternative provision
- f) a pattern of persistent lateness develops
- g) there are child protection concerns
- h) there are specific welfare issues which are preventing a pupil from accessing education
- i) a pupil is withdrawn from the academy by parents /carers who are moving to a new area and the academy does not receive a request for the pupil's records from a school in that area.

Referrals will be made to the Kent LA PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service by the Headteacher/Principal where necessary.

## **13. Children Missing from Suitable Education**

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a new duty on schools in England and Wales to make arrangements to identify children of compulsory school age who are deemed to be missing education. Pupils who are deemed to be missing education will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer within five school days. This process does not replace any of the Child Protection Procedures. Existing safeguarding procedures and mechanisms for reporting and recording child protection concerns are to be observed at all times.

## 14. Timing of the School Day

<b>Start of school day</b>	<b>8:50am</b>
<b>Morning Break</b>	
FS/KS1	10:35am
KS2	10:35am
<b>Lunchtime</b>	
FS/KS1	12:00
KS2	12:10pm
<b>End of school day</b>	<b>3:15pm</b>

If the academy wishes to change the timing of the beginning and end of the school day, the Headteacher/Principal will seek and follow guidance given by the LA.

## 15. Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence

Penalty notices for absence from school have been issued since April 2005. Following consultation on a Code of Conduct, it was agreed that Penalty Notices would be issued by the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service based on requests from the school or police.

If issued, the penalty will be £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by Kent County Council. **Please note that a Penalty Notice is issued to each parent for each child.**

The following circumstances will be considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of penalty notices:

- where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours during the first five days of exclusion
- overt truancy (including truancy sweeps)
- parentally-condoned absence
- holidays in term time
- delayed return from extended holidays without prior academy agreement
- persistent lateness after the register has closed.

A pupil has to be absent from the academy in one, or a combination of these circumstances for at least ten sessions in any 100 sessions before the issuing of a penalty notice can be considered. (10 sessions is equivalent to 5 days).

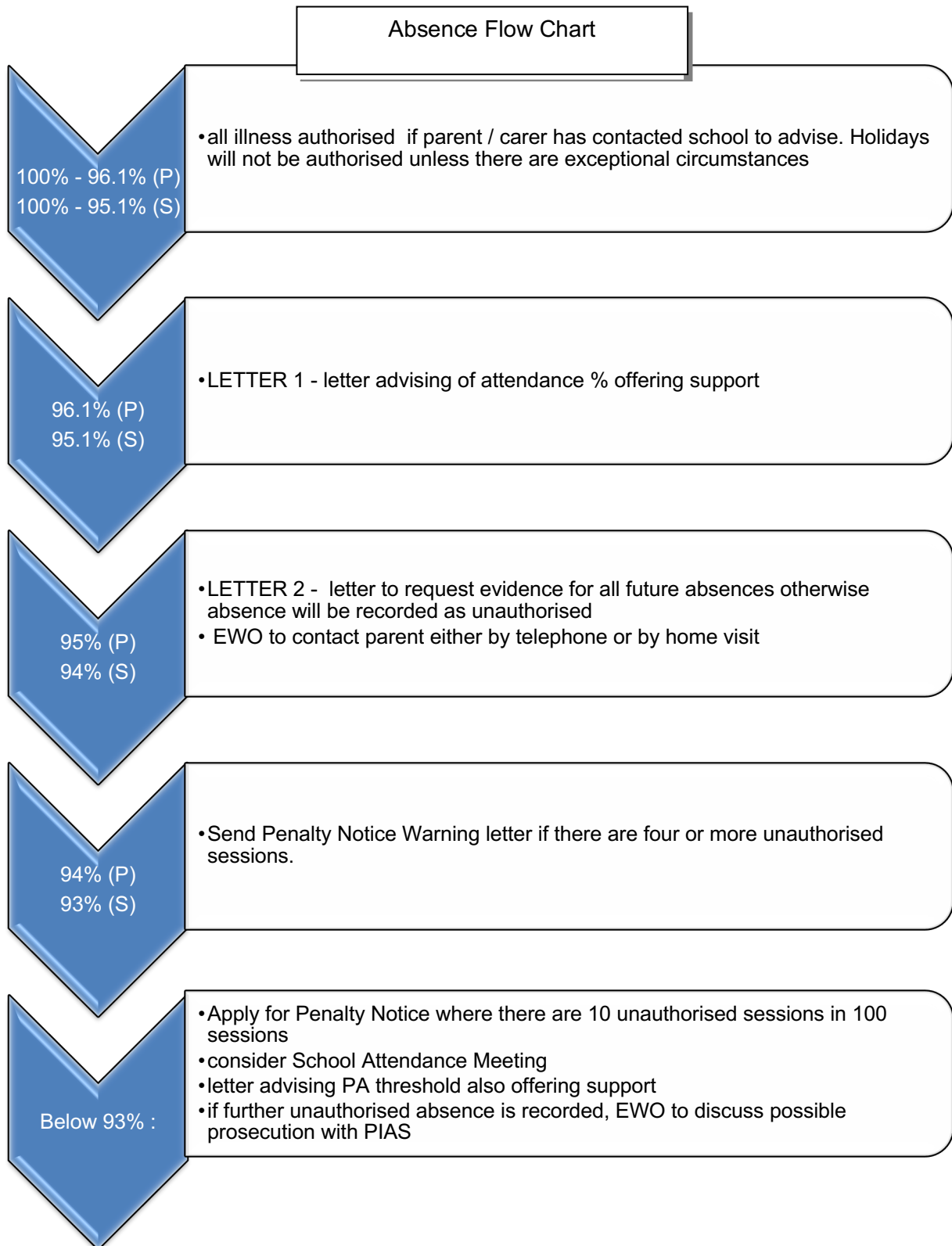
Following a request for the issuing of a penalty notice a check is made that the request meets the conditions of the Code of Conduct. A warning letter from the Attendance Service will then be sent to the parents / carers explaining that unless their child attends full time for the 15 day monitoring period, a penalty notice will be issued.

For cases of unauthorised holiday during term time, the Headteacher/Principal will write to the parent advising them that the holiday will not be authorised. A warning letter is not issued by the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service for term time holidays.

The academy will inform individual parents / carers, where attendance is a concern that they are at risk of a referral for a penalty notice.



## Appendix A – Absence Flow Chart



## LETTER 1

Dear

**Child:**

**DoB:**

My role as **Education Welfare Officer** at **NAME OF ACADEMY** involves checking the register in school and investigating the reasons for frequent or excessive absence and I note that **NAME OF CHILD's** attendance between the **INSERT DATE OF FIRST DAY OF TERM** and **CURRENT DATE** was **INSERT %**.

I will be monitoring **NAME OF CHILD's** attendance during the coming weeks and hope to see an immediate and sustained improvement.

If you are experiencing any difficulties with regard to regular attendance and punctuality please contact **NAME OF FLO/MEMBER OF STAFF** on **TELEPHONE NUMBER** to discuss what support may be available to you.

I have enclosed a copy of **NAME OF CHILD's** attendance record for your information.

Yours sincerely

## LETTER 2

Dear

**Child:**

**DoB:**

Further to my letter dated **INSERT DATE** OF % LETTER OFFERING SUPPORT, I note that there are continuing concerns regarding **INSERT NAME OF CHILD's** attendance.

I write to advise you that unless you are able to provide medical evidence to support these and all future absences, they will be recorded as unauthorised.

I have enclosed a copy of **NAME OF CHILD's** attendance record for your information.

Should you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me on **TELEPHONE NUMBER**.

Yours sincerely

## Penalty Notice Warning Letter

Penalty Notices – Warning Letter

Dear

**Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence – NAME OF CHILD**

From April 2005, Kent County Council introduced Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from school of at least 10 sessions (5 days). During April 2017, the 'Education Penalty Notices' Code of Conduct was revised. The new Code of Conduct now states that the threshold for applying for an 'Education Penalty Notice' is 10 or more sessions (five school days) during any 100 possible school sessions or 50 school days.

The following circumstances will be considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- Overt truancy (including pupils caught on truancy sweeps).
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Holidays in term time
- Delayed return from extended holidays without prior school agreement
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed.

If issued, the penalty will be £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Kent County Council. **Please note that a Penalty Notice is issued to each parent for each child.**

At **NAME OF ACADEMY** we consider attendance and these legal powers so important that we are bringing this to your attention.

Between **INSERT DATE** and **INSERT DATE**, **NAME OF CHILD** has recorded **NUMBER OF** sessions of unauthorised absence. Unauthorised absence includes lateness after registration has closed.

Please ensure that your child attends school regularly and on time.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher/Principal

**ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003 SECTION 23**

**PENALTY NOTICES FOR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

**£60 PENALTY IF PAID WITHIN 21 DAYS**

**£120 PENALTY IF PAID AFTER 21 DAYS BUT WITHIN 28 DAYS**

## **PA Threshold Letter**

Dear

**Child:**

**DoB:**

I have been monitoring **NAME OF CHILD's** attendance and I write to inform you that **NAME OF CHILD's** attendance is currently **INSERT %**, this means that **SHE/HE** has been identified as a Persistent Absentee.

The Department of Education's definition of a Persistent Absentee is a child that is absent from school for 10% of the academic year. This equates to 19 days absence and can include arriving at school after registration.

Persistent absence is a serious problem for pupils. Much of the work children miss when they are off school is never made up, leaving these pupils at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. There is also clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement.

Pupils who miss out on learning the basic skills at primary school will find it hard to catch up, particularly in the subjects like Maths where the learning is incremental and gaps in understanding mean the pupil will struggle to get on to the next stage.

Persistent absenteeism at primary school can also lead to poor attendance at secondary school. Therefore it is imperative to encourage excellent attendance whilst **NAME OF CHILD** is at **NAME OF ACADEMY**.

The parent of every child of compulsory school age is required to ensure that the child receives a suitable full-time education to the child's ability, age, aptitude and any special education needs the child may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Failure of a parent to secure regular attendance of their school registered child of compulsory school age can lead to a penalty notice or prosecution

If you are experiencing any difficulties with regard to regular attendance and/or punctuality, please contact **NAME OF FLO/MEMBER OF STAFF** on **TELEPHONE NUMBER** to discuss what support may be available to you.

I have enclosed a copy of **NAME OF CHILD's** attendance record for your information.

Should you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me on **TELEPHONE NUMBER**.

Yours sincerely



## Appendix B – Religious Observance Examples

### Religious Observance Examples

#### Example 1

If a family want to travel to visit other family members to celebrate Eid then the two days for the Eid festival would be approved and coded R, but the Headteacher/Principal does not need to approve any travel or holiday time with family, nor do they have to approve absence as a result of fasting. They would instead consider the child and the request and use their discretionary powers to consider whether to approve any further days, other than the two days for religious observance.

#### Example 2

A Jewish Orthodox family request to remove their child from school to attend a Jewish conference in America and request to keep their child at home during the last week of term so they can avoid participating in any Christian Christmas celebration. The academy should consider the request to attend the Jewish conference as they would any other leave of absence request, as although the event itself is religious the conference is not a day of religious observance set aside within the Jewish Orthodox calendar. In terms of the child being removed from the academy to avoid participating in any Christmas festival, parents/carers do have a right to withdraw the child from a celebration or an act of worship not of their religion, so it would be important for the academy to discuss with the parents/carers where there are activities that their child is withdrawn from and the academy should provide an alternative activity. Where there are usual learning activities and classes going on up to the end of term, then parents/carers do not have the right to withdraw them and any absence would be unauthorised and a Penalty Notice would be considered.