# Plaxtol Primary School Attendance Policy

This policy has been impact assessed by Mrs Claire Rowley in order to ensure that it does not have an adverse effect on race, gender or disability equality.

Date reviewed: November 2026

Date agreed and ratified by Governing Body:10.11.26

Date of next review: October 2027

This policy will be reviewed annually, and following any concerns and/or updates to national and local guidance or procedures

Plaxtol Primary 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. This policy represents our commitment to expect 100% attendance from all our pupils, which is achieved by many children. It sets out our expectations and the strategies that the school will undertake to achieve this.

In accordance with the Department for Education (DfE) advice to schools, Plaxtol Primary School will:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensure every child has access to full-time education.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

The school follows the DfE attendance model of Expect, Monitor, Listen and Understand, Facilitate Support, Formalise Support and Enforce. Enforcement action will only be considered where support has been offered and attendance remains a concern.

The Governors, Headteacher and school staff will work in partnership with parents and carers to achieve excellent attendance at Plaxtol Primary School.

The term 'parent' includes all natural parents, any person who has parental responsibility and any person who has day to day care of the child.

**Principles**

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement - it is a parent's/carer's legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development and is essential if children are to benefit fully from their school life.
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children while they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is irregular will be considered vulnerable.

**Aims**

- To ensure that all children attend school regularly and punctually, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development. Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%.
- To safeguard pupils to the best of the school's ability.
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and Governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence. Any pupil with attendance below 90% is classed by the DfE as a Persistent Absentee (PA). Any pupil with attendance 50% or below is classed by the DfE as severe absence (SA). Schools are required to identify all PA/ SA pupils and report to the DfE at regular intervals during the academic year
- To improve the life chances of the children attending school and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood. Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, higher education and employment or training.

**Promoting Attendance**

Plaxtol Primary School will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the Home-School agreement, newsletters, rewards and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance. Children attending 100% at the end of the school year will receive a certificate. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and children.

**The School will:**

- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and know that their presence is valued.
- Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality using newsletters and other forms of communications with parents making attendance a high priority.
- Employ a key member of staff with responsibility for monitoring, improving and evaluating school attendance. At Plaxtol Primary School this role is fulfilled by the headteacher who is the Senior Attendance Champion.
- Follow a structured process for managing poor attendance. This may include writing to parents, inviting them to attend meetings and making arrangements in school to support their child to attend school more regularly.
- All staff will receive regular attendance training and updates as part of safeguarding and professional development.
- Encourage our children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life.
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored using our electronic registration system and that absences are followed up promptly.
- Communicate effectively with other agencies to support children with any issues there might be.
- Meet the legal requirements for recording pupil absence using the correct registration procedures and codes with reference to authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Have procedures in place to help children settle in after a long absence. It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This will include ensuring that the pupil is supported to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils.
- Make arrangements to meet the requirements of pupils with additional educational needs or an Education Health Care Plan.

Attendance concerns will be explored with families to identify barriers and appropriate support. Where needed, attendance support plans, Early Help and outside agencies will be involved.

**Parental Responsibility**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Children can enter the school between 8.35-8.45am and all children should be in class by 8.45am. 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 parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know the child is safe and their whereabouts are known. Parents should regularly update the school during any period of absence from school and inform the school when their child is returning.**

**We expect parents to:**

- Promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality, with their child aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Keep absences to a minimum.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address.
- Telephone Plaxtol Primary School when their child is unable to attend on the first day of the absence and each day thereafter with the reason for this. This can also be done by email or via Tapestry.

- Parents should also let the school know if their child is going to be late eg if a car breaks down or an urgent appointment has been made.
- Provide a written explanation for the absence when their child returns to school.
- Medical evidence may be requested where attendance concerns exist and where it is reasonable and proportionate to do so.
- Whenever possible all medical/dental appointments should be made outside of school hours unless an emergency has arisen.
- Contact the school at the earliest opportunity if their child is experiencing any difficulties and the school will do everything possible to resolve the issues.
- If needed speak to the child's teacher on their return.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility under **Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act** and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school may create an offence in law.

**We expect pupils to:**

- Attend every day unless they are too ill, or the absence has been authorised by the school.
- Arrive at school on time.

**The Role of School Staff**

At Plaxtol Primary School there is a whole school approach to ensuring excellent school attendance with some staff having specific responsibilities.

The headteacher has overall responsibility for school attendance and is the Senior Attendance Champion. Her contact details are 01732 810200 or crowley@plaxtol.kent.sch.uk. Mrs Annette Lan, the office administrator, manages day to day recording of attendance. Her details are 01732 810200 or office @plaxtol.kent.sch.uk

Class teachers will keep accurate registers, completing the register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance register twice daily is a legal requirement. Teachers will mark pupils present, absent or late.

It is the responsibility of the administration officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date.
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence to ensure each child's safety.
- Where there has been no communication from parents, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered on the register.
- To inform parents every seasonal term of their child's attendance
- To ensure parents receive a copy of the School's Attendance Information leaflet in their child's admission pack.

**Vulnerable groups**

As a school we have identified key vulnerable groups such as pupil premium, SEN and Young carers. We monitor their attendance closely in meetings with the school attendance champion and the SENCO.

**Mental health and EBSA**

We also offer support to pupils experiencing mental health difficulties. The school recognises that absence can be linked to emotional wellbeing, mental health difficulties and anxiety. Attendance support will be tailored to individual needs and, where appropriate, involve outside services.

**Monitoring poor attendance**
The SLT and the admin officer refer to the 'Procedures for addressing irregular attendance and punctuality' when monitoring poor attendance.
Attendance data will be analysed weekly using our attendance tracker. We meet monthly to identify emerging absence patterns, persistent absence, severe absence and vulnerable groups requiring support.

Weekly attendance is recorded on the school weekly newsletter, parents are sent their child's attendance every seasonal term and annual attendance is sent with annual school reports at the end of the academic year.

As well as this, six times a year, whole school attendance is reported to Governors on the Headteacher report, as well as a breakdown for vulnerable groups. We also report on persistent absence and severe absence as a school and by vulnerable group.

**Severe absence (SA)**
In the case of severe absence (where attendance is below 50%), then frequent attendance reviews; multi-agency meetings; safeguarding review; Early Help involvement; and Local Authority attendance support will be put in place.

**Lateness**
Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.45am. All pupils who arrive late must report, with their parent, to the school office where the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late in the register (registration code L) from 8.45am. The register will close at 9.15am. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration and this will count as an unauthorised absence (registration code U).

Frequent lateness after the register has closed will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for further action.

**Absence**
A child's absence will be authorised if approval has been given by the school in advance or an acceptable reason has been given afterwards.

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence. 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.
The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. 'poorly' or 'unwell'
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child/family birthday
- Family Holidays (see 'leave of absence' below)

**Leave of Absence/Holidays**
From 1st September 2013, a change in the law removed a Headteacher's ability (at their own discretion) to authorise any leave of absence of up to 10 days. Therefore, no requests for holiday absence will be authorised.

The Headteacher will not authorise any leave of absence unless:

- An application has been made in advance by the parent with whom the child resides **and**
- The Headteacher considers that there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application. Exceptional circumstances may constitute a music or performing arts exam, participation in a local or National sporting event, the wedding of a close relative etc.

Any leave of absence for 'exceptional circumstances' must be requested in writing to the Headteacher.

Persistent unauthorised absence may result in statutory referral to the Local Authority. The school will follow the appropriate procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the pupil's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings will be attached to the completed referral form with any other relevant information.

## Children Missing Education

Parents must inform the school in writing if they are planning to remove their child from the school roll. This must include the details of the arrangements that will be put in place for the child's education. If parents do not communicate with the school then legally the school will have to follow the process below to ensure their safeguarding duty is met.

Department for Education guidance relating to Children Missing Education (CME) states that if after ten days' continuous absence the school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will make a referral to the Local Authority.

**Penalty Notices**

Plaxtol Primary School may make use of Penalty Notices to address poor school attendance in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

A penalty notice can be issued as a result of the following:

- Parentally condoned absence
- Unauthorised leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term-time
- Delayed return from leave of absence without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)
- Where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours during the first five days of exclusion.

A Penalty Notice may be issued when a pupil has been absent for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation within a rolling 10 school week period. This period may scan different terms.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £160 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28-day period may result in prosecution by the local authority. If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling three-year period, the notice will be charged at the higher rate of £160 with no option for this second offence to be discharged at £80.

Plaxtol Primary School asks that parents fully support this policy as a vital contribution towards their child's education.