



Attendance Policy

June 2023

How can children learn if they do not attend school? Simply put, they cannot. Therefore, Medway Green School works with parents, transport and Local Authorities to ensure that all students attend school as much as possible.

1.0 Transition

When children are referred to Medway Green School, they very often have a history of poor attendance at their previous school. Some will not actually be attending and many will be on heavily reduced timetables. The first cause of anxiety for many parents is whether or not their child will attend. As a specialist provision, MGS is much more aligned with the needs of our students than their previous mainstream placements and the children see that almost without exception once they begin to attend.

Starting a new school, especially for a child with special needs can be a daunting experience and is likely to exacerbate existing emotional dysregulation, anxieties and sensory issues. Therefore, all students undergo a transition period when they join MGS. The intended outcome of this is to introduce new students to their new environment in short periods of time, increasing as they become more confident and settled.

Too much too soon can be overwhelming and possibly lead to the student being highly anxious about attending school and potentially refusing. Generally, students attend school up to break during the first week (11.00) and then Lunch during the second week (12.45), leading to full time week 3. This is monitored and if a child is struggling with the transition, then the process can be modified. For example, if it is clear that a child is not coping with the transition at all, the requirement to only attend until 11.00 would be extended for a longer period. Other examples could include staying until 13.30 to allow a child to experience lunchtime and eating with other students before going home.

The process is not set in stone and can be adjusted for each child. The intention is that the process supports the child and parents in the transition from one placement to the next. The transition process is overseen by the FLO who act as the point of contact for the parents and build the home school relationship.

2.0 Attendance expectations

All students are expected to attend full time unless there are mitigating circumstances that cannot be avoided. Parents are asked to phone the school office in the morning if their child is unwell. The FLO will often be able to offer practical advice and strategies including home visits to support attendance at school.

3.0 Tackling poor attendance

If a student is absent without parental explanation, a staff member will phone to ask if everything is OK and discuss when the student will next be attending. If non-attendance is becoming a more regular occurrence, the FLO will contact parents to have a discussion around attendance and how the school and parents can work together to ensure future attendance, often implementing a Family Wellbeing Support Plan to support.

The involvement of the FLO may include the offer of a home visit. This is often a very useful intervention, as it allows a member of staff to see the home and make practical suggestions to do with routine, environment etc. It is also a further opportunity to build a positive home/school relationship, which often, in turn underpins good attendance.

If a student is, absent for more than 4 days without a reasonable explanation being provided, the FLO will make a home visit at the request of the Headteacher.

Home/school communication takes a high priority at Medway Green and parents have the opportunity to talk with TAs and teachers involved in their child's education on a continual basis. This includes attendance and discussing amendments to the school day to encourage students to attend.

The strong bonds built between the FLO and parents/students often leads to an increase in attendance. However, further measures may sometimes be necessary and the FLO, alongside the Safeguarding Team, will consider referral to Early Help and access to trained family support advisors and other supportive mechanisms. The traditional warnings and fines route utilised in mainstream is not something that MGS feels is wholly appropriate given the vulnerable nature of our families. However, the Headteacher may decide to use a more formal route with LA representation if it is warranted and appropriate.

4.0 Authorised absences

All absences will be initially recorded as unauthorised until explanation has been received. Only the Headteacher has the authority to record absences as authorised. This will normally be the case for reasonable lengths of illness, medical appointments, meetings etc. Absence will not be authorised if students are not in school because they have not been ready in time for their taxi. For absences known in advance e.g. for medical appointments, parents must inform the school beforehand either by contacting the school office and sending copies of the relevant documents, such as appointment letters.

5.0 Holidays

As missing school can have such a negative impact on our students, term time holidays will not be authorised and parents will be required to book holidays outside of term time. However, the Headteacher reserves the right to authorise leave due in exceptional circumstances. Leave cannot be authorised retrospectively, and parents must make a request for leave in writing before the leave commences. If leave is not authorised by the Headteacher, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, and may result in a Penalty Notice from KCC.