



Maidstone Grammar School
for Girls

Non sibi sed omnibus

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

School Policy

2022-2023

Contact: Mrs A Hart - Deputy Headteacher

A forward-thinking community with a tradition of excellence

History Log

Last Revised	Revised By	Ratified By Governors	Next Review Date	Time Scale
April 2015	P Horstrup	N/A	April 2018	Every 3 years
January 2017 (new KCC model policy adopted) Updated May 2017	C Binks	N/A	January 2020	Every 3 years
March 2019	C Binks	N/A	March 2022	Every 3 years
June 2022	A Hart	29.06.22	July 2023	Annual

Key Staff for 2022-2023

Senior Leader with Strategic Responsibility for Attendance - Mrs Agnes Hart -Deputy Headteacher

Members of staff who contribute to the strategic approach to attendance

Mrs Nathalie Lawrence - Assistant Headteacher - KS3

Mrs Lucy Shimmin - Assistant Headteacher - KS4

Mr Neil Walker - Assistant Headteacher - KS5

Ms Nancy John - Attendance Officer

Statement of Intent

Maidstone Grammar School for Girls (MGGS) is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our students. Regular attendance is critical if our students are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all students. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

The Governors, Head Teacher and Staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at MGGS.

Aims:

- To maintain a clear system to promote excellent attendance and punctuality, clearly communicated to all School staff, students and parents/carers who are all working to agreed routines and standards.
- To encourage students to attend regularly and to be punctual as valued members of the School community.
- To put in place an effective and efficient administrative system for monitoring and intervening with issues relating to attendance and punctuality.
- To offer students and parents/carers support, advice and guidance on the importance of excellent attendance and punctuality.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(or children) attends school regularly and arrives on time. Regular attendance is essential to the wellbeing and academic progress of students. Young people should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them. Poor attendance undermines their education and can place students at risk, encouraging anti-social behaviour.

Student Responsibility

Students are responsible for:

- Aiming for 100% attendance
- Arriving punctually to registration
- Responding clearly when their name is called in registration
- Sitting in silence while registers are taken
- Ensuring work missed through absence is caught up as soon as possible, depending on the length of absence but within 2 weeks as a maximum.

The Role of School Staff

At MGGs there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The **Attendance Officer** has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Form Tutors complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).

It is the Responsibility of Parents/Carers

- To be fully supportive of the School with regard to attendance and punctuality.
- To support the School and their child(ren) by not requesting leave of absence during term time, and minimising where possible, all other authorised absence i.e. dental appointments, during the school day.
- To follow the school procedures for dealing with attendance through making contact with the School on the first day, and each subsequent day, of absence and ensure they follow up with contact to the Attendance Officer. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that the student is safe. This is the case for all students on roll, including Year 12 and 13.
- To ensure their child(ren) arrives at school by 8.40am.

It is the Responsibility of Teachers/Form Tutors

- To act as role-models by being punctual to every lesson/registration.
- To take the register promptly at the beginning of every lesson/registration period.
- To ensure registers on SIMS are accurate in terms of any students withdrawn for other activities e.g. intervention, rehearsals.
- To monitor attendance statistics and raise concerns regarding suspected truancy in liaison with the Attendance Office, Head of Study and Pastoral Team.

It is the Responsibility of the Form Tutor

- To take responsibility for dealing with issues of attendance and punctuality in relation to their Tutor Group e.g. liaising with the Head of Study and Attendance Officer.

- To work in cohesion with the Head of Study to raise the profile of excellent attendance and punctuality with their tutor group.
- To assist in reintegrating any of their tutees after a period of prolonged absence

It is the Responsibility of the Heads of Study and Assistant Headteacher

- To raise the profile of excellent attendance through assemblies, and the weekly Tutor Schedule.
- To recognise and reward students who have outstanding attendance and punctuality as well as recognising and rewarding students with improving attendance and punctuality. Attendance recognition and rewards will be done in conjunctions with the whole school recognition and rewards system.
- To monitor and review the attendance of students in their Year group(s), identifying any patterns of groups or individual concerns and taking appropriate action.
- To identify patterns of attendance within a session to ensure students are attending all time tabbed lessons.
- To be responsible for regular liaison with the School's Attendance Officer regarding the poor attendance of students and issues related to poor punctuality.
- To conduct a thorough analysis of termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends. This will include cohort analysis, days of poor attendance where appropriate subjects which have low attendance.
- To liaise with parents/carers in response to attendance, punctuality and truancy issues, and attend meetings as appropriate, making accurate records and ensuring agreed actions are in place.
- To support tutors to fulfill their duties regarding attendance and punctuality and to take appropriate action when this does not occur
- To ensure that the school's Reward System in relation to attendance and punctuality is used effectively within their Year groups.
- To coordinate the provision of appropriate work for students with an extended period of authorised absence, in liaison with the Attendance Officer: please note, work should only be provided where there is authorised absence.

It is the Responsibility of the Attendance Officer/Administration Staff

- To ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the School computerised registration system for attendance and punctuality i.e. processing registers, preparing and distributing attendance data.
- To enter the appropriate attendance code into the register.
- To establish reasons for absence, to include telephone calls to parents/carers on the first day of absence, text messages (EduLink), letters and attendance meetings where necessary.
- Where it has not been possible to contact parents by phone, are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- To monitor lesson registers throughout the school day.
- To lead/assist in following-up poor attendance and punctuality e.g. organising attendance meetings with parents/carers and external agencies, ensuring that student targets are agreed and monitored.
- To liaise with Kent County Council and make referrals where there is a serious cause for concern e.g. Child Missing in Education (CME).
- To monitor attendance of students on the Child Protection Register and other vulnerable students and alert the Safeguarding Team and Pastoral team of concerns.

- To complete attendance checks on any students in Alternative Provision and to update the School's register accordingly.
- To complete attendance checks on any students on a Managed Move and to update the School's register accordingly.

It is the Responsibility of the School Leadership Team

- To co-ordinate and monitor the policy and procedures for attendance and punctuality throughout the School.
- To support the work of the Attendance Officer and Heads of Study to raise the profile and importance of attendance and punctuality i.e. through the assembly programme and the reward system.
- To provide accurate data on attendance for Census and Governors.
- To monitor whole-school trends in attendance and punctuality data and identify any patterns in terms of specific groups or individuals e.g., Pupil Premium, SEND.
- To use attendance data to work with identified students and their families where attendance is a concern.
- To work with parents to fulfill the agreements set out in the Parenting Contract for students where attendance is a concern.
- Benchmark attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national level to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Monitor the data and the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented.
- To ensure that School expectations on attendance and punctuality are communicated clearly to all stakeholders.

It is the Responsibility of Governors

- To review and agree the Attendance and Punctuality policy.
- To agree attendance targets.
- To take a lead role in supporting the School in the implementation of its approach to attendance and punctuality.

Attendance Protocols

- Parent/carer contacts the school using Edulink on each day of absence with clear and specific reasons for a student's absence. If absence is notified in advance, e.g. medical appointments, interview, this should be at least a week in advance.
- The Attendance Officer enters details into the attendance section of the school's management information system (SIMS) and enters an absence mark in SIMS for the duration of the absence.
- The Attendance Officer identifies absences that are not explained for each session and contacts parents, the same day, to understand why and when the student will return to school (and where appropriate will liaise with HoS to inform foster carers and/or social workers). Where absence is recorded as unexplained in the register, the correct code will be inputted (no later than 5 working days after the session).
- When appropriate, teachers raise any concerns about attendance or punctuality with the appropriate HoS or line manager who will liaise with the Attendance Officer.
- The Attendance Officer takes appropriate action (see attendance procedures below), in liaison with HoS, in any circumstances where absence is or has the potential to be a concern and contacts parents/carers to discuss attendance issues.
- The School will regularly inform parents/carers about the child's attendance ad

absence levels and the impact absence has on learning.

- The School will hold regular meetings with parents/carers who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently absent to discuss engagement at school.
- The School will identify students who need support from external agencies as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.
- The school will support students back to school following lengthy or unavoidable periods of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- The school will make regular statutory data returns to the local authority
- Referral is made to PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service (PIAS) if issues cannot be resolved. See KCC School Referral Pathway.

Lateness

The register is taken at 8.40am - 09.00 am and 2.25 pm - 2.30 pm. Students arriving to school after 8.40am must enter school by Student Reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded, along with how many minutes they are late. The student will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L'). The register will close at 9am. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

All students who are late to school once they have signed in via Student Reception are required to collect a punctuality slip. The slip must be given to their form tutor or classroom teacher. The punctuality slip confirms that the student has signed into school via Student Reception. This is a safeguarding requirement to ensure that all students have been recorded as present. Failure to sign into Student Reception and collect a punctuality slip will be marked as a truancy and the student could be issued with a Leadership Detention.

Students who are late to afternoon registration at 2.25 pm will be marked as late and issued with an L code. Students who do not attend afternoon registration without a justifiable reason will be marked as absent. The absence will be investigated and students could be issued with a Leadership detention for truancy.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

If a student receives more than 2 late marks in a week, without a justifiable reason, they are issued with a 30 minute pastoral detention. Where there are persistent concerns regarding punctuality, this will be referred to the Head of Study for follow up, which may include arranging a meeting with parents and/or placing the student on attendance and punctuality mentoring. The school will be the sole arbiter of what is a justifiable reason.

Parents/carers of students who are persistently late may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice warning letter. If punctuality continues to be a concern and a student has 12 or more unauthorised late marks, a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued.

Subject Registration, Punctuality & Truancy

The class register must be taken at the start of every lesson. This will ensure that the School is able to monitor any suspected truancy from lessons which is then investigated. If it is found that a student has been truanting, then this will be formally recorded as an

unauthorised absence and followed up by the Pastoral team.

Lateness to lessons must be challenged and recorded on the SIMS register. Subject teachers must take appropriate action against students who are late without a valid reason e.g., sign a student's Conduct Card and remind them that once two lates have been recorded, a department detention will be issued. Students who are late for a genuine reason, must have a signed note from a member of staff, or a late slip from the Attendance Officer. Teachers must ensure they enter a timed 'L' into the electronic register should the student be late, so that SIMS records are accurate.

Staff are responsible for updating SIMS if individual or small numbers of students are withdrawn from lessons and advising the Attendance Officer in advance of absences of larger groups e.g. school trips, rehearsals etc.

Attendance Letters

Attendance is monitored weekly. If a student's attendance drops to less than 95% and there is no satisfactory reason for the absence with proof of medical evidence, or a pattern emerges of persistent / intermittent absence, an attendance letter is sent to parents/carers. Attendance is reviewed in 4 school weeks after the initial attendance letter is sent.

If attendance has not improved or worsens, the parent carer will receive a level 1 attendance letter.

If a student's attendance has still not improved, parents/carers will receive a level 2 attendance letter and they are invited into school to discuss the situation and next steps.

Thresholds of School Action for Poor Attendance

Parents and carers are required to provide medical evidence and/or proof of reason for absence if a student's attendance falls below 95%.

- Students who have 94% attendance or below may receive a warning letter from the School. This letter will state the student's overall attendance percentage and that if there is no improvement in attendance, normally within the subsequent four-week period, then further action may be taken. The school will use its discretion in cases of unavoidable absence for reasons such as prolonged illness or bereavement.
- Students who have 92% attendance and below will receive a Level 1 attendance letter - Head of Study or line manager to investigate and notify Assistant Headteacher of concerns. Head of Study to contact parents if appropriate. The school will use its discretion in cases of unavoidable absence for reasons such as prolonged illness (parents/carers will be asked to provide medical evidence in order to authorise absence).
- Students with attendance below 90% will receive a Level 2 attendance letter. Parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss ongoing attendance concerns. The school may consider a Fixed Penalty Notice or Early Help referral.
- Below 85% - Where the absences have not been authorised the school will consult and in most cases refer to Kent County Council Attendance team.
- A referral may be considered in the case of unauthorised holiday, even if the overall percentage is not this low.

Children Missing Education

No student should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and PIAS when appropriate.

Where a student is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:

- If the whereabouts of the student is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (student file) has been requested by another school.

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. This may be delegated to the relevant Assistant Headteacher for each Key Stage, who will consult with the Headteacher. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. Planned absences should be requested in advance, at least a week in advance if possible. If planned absences are not authorised, parents will be notified by letter, which may be sent via email.

If no explanation is received for absence, absences will not be authorised.

Absence during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific 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
- Family Holidays.

Exceptional Circumstances Could Include

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.

Any Examples Provided are Illustrative Rather than Exhaustive

The school will take a student's previous record of attendance into account when considering requests for absence. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

It is important to note that only Headeachers can agree to the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised

absence.

Leave of Absence/Holiday

The Headteacher will not usually 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.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance (a week where possible) and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Head Teacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher’s decision is final and will be confirmed in writing.

Although each request will be considered individually, Maidstone Grammar School for Girls will not usually authorise leave of absence in term time under the following circumstances:

- At the beginning of school terms
- During examination periods
- Where the child is persistently absent, including because of ill health.

Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively. If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Penalty Notices (KCC policy)

If support has not improved attendance and absences have not been authorised, leading to a period of unauthorised absence and persistent absence from school, the situation will be addressed through legal measures including Penalty Notices. The school will work in partnership with KCC to where parent co-operation in the effort to support regular attendance is either absent or deemed insufficient.

Penalty Notices for Lateness

Penalty Notices are issued in Accordance with Kent County Council’s Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct Effective from January 2016, as revised in April 2017, when:

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets 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(s) will be issued (one per parent per child).

Penalty Notice for Absence

Notices are issued in Accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct Effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017.

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will 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).

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.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Persistent unauthorised absence 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 that the referral has been made.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **must** be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include :

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

The school may also take internal action in cases of persistent absence, which could include, but is not limited to, loss of privileges in school, rewards being withheld or charges made (for example, for examination entries which have been paid by the school).

Attendance Data

The school uses SIMS and Edulink to electronically manage attendance data in order to improve accuracy and speed up the process of sharing and analysing information. The School shares relevant information with KCC attendance team and the DfE.

Attendance Support

A range of strategies are in place to support students and their parents/carers to ensure good

attendance habits are developed and maintained. These include:

- Reintegration support after extended absence
- Home visits (where appropriate)
- Support from the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL where necessary.
- Support through in school counselling or where appropriate sign posting to external support agencies
- Pastoral support through Head of Study and form tutor
- Attendance meetings with attendance officer, Heads of Study or Assistant Headteacher
- Referral to Kent Front Door Service to access support from Early Help, Social Services, CYPMHS
- Referral to Attendance Inclusion Service
- Attendance Mentoring programme
- Temporary personalised time table.

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or the student and parents have not engaged the school will work with the local authority to:

- Put formal support in place through Parental Contract or an education supervision order.
- Issue a penalty notice
- Social service referral
- Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed as appropriate.

All support strategies will be regularly reviewed to assess the impact and identify any further support the student may require. Where absence continues despite support the school will work in partnership with the local authority and other relevant agencies such as social services.

Students with Medical Conditions:

Some students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include students suffering with long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. The school will work in partnership with parents/carers to improve attendance whilst being mindful of the barriers by putting in additional support where necessary and appropriate to do so. This includes:

- Having sensitive conversations to identify the right support for students with physical or mental health conditions.
- Making reasonable adjustments outlined in the student's Provision Plan.
- Referral to supportive agencies
- Where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the student's Educational Healthcare Plan (EHCP) is accessed.
- Personalised timetable
- Regular review meetings with parents and external agencies to review and monitor support in place.

Personalised and or Part-time Timetables

All students of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In exceptional circumstances, where it is in a student's best interest, the school recognises there may be a need for a temporary personalised or part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a student from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A personalised or part-time timetable will only be in place for a short period of time. If this provision is for longer than two school weeks, the school will inform the KCC attendance team. Personalised

time-tables form part of a formal process with a limited time period. The school alongside parents, students and where appropriate external agencies will regularly review the effectiveness of part-time or personalised timetables to meet the needs of the student and improve attendance.

Illness During the School Day

Students who become unwell during the school day will be looked after in the School's medical room until a parent/carer/other relative is able to collect them in person. This is to ensure student safety and wellbeing. If there are exceptional circumstances that mean a student cannot be collected, arrangements will be made by the Administration and Pastoral team in conjunction with the parent/carer giving full consideration of any safeguarding risks that may arise.

COVID-19

If a student presents with symptoms during the school day that could indicate COVID-19, they will be assisted by a First Aider, kept in a suitable location to allow for isolation and parents/carers will be contacted to arrange collection. Parents/carers will be advised to take their child for testing for Covid-19 and must advise the School of the outcome as soon as possible.

The Attendance Officer will continue to update attendance procedures in line with the latest government guidance, disseminating to the wider school as required.