Attendance Policy

School Policy

2019 -2022

Mrs C Binks – Assistant Headteacher
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.

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

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.
• Handing in absence notes.
• 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.

Parental Responsibility
Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the student and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes puts students at risk, encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is parents’ responsibility to contact the school on the first and every day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that the student is safe. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning. This is the case for all students on roll, including Year 12 and 13.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.40am. All students that arrive late must report, to reception, where the reason for lateness is recorded, along with how many minutes they are late.

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).

Teachers mark students present (/) or N (not present) for each lesson. The form tutor or class teacher notifies the Head of Study or Head of Department of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to ensure:
• Attendance and lateness records are up to date.
• Attendance data is analysed on a weekly basis.
• If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call.
• Where it has not been possible to contact parents by phone, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
• The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes).

Attendance Protocols
1. Parent/carer telephones the school 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 by letter or by email to the school. Ideally, this should be at least a week in advance.
2. 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.
3. When appropriate, teachers raise any concerns about attendance or punctuality with the appropriate HoS or line manager who will liaise with the attendance officer.
4. 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.
5. Referral is made to PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service (PIAS) if issues cannot be resolved. See KCC School Referral Pathway.

Attendance letters
• Attendance is monitored weekly. If a student’s attendance drops to less than 90% and there is no satisfactory reason for the absence, or a pattern emerges of persistent / intermittent absence, a Level 1 letter is sent to parents/carers. Attendance is reviewed in 4 weeks after Level 1 letter sent.
• If attendance has not improved or worsens, a Level 2 letter is sent home. Parents/carers are then invited into school to discuss the situation.

Thresholds of School Action for Poor Attendance
• 90 - 95% attendance - Head of Study or line manager to investigate and notify Assistant Headteacher of concerns. Head of Study to contact parent if appropriate. The school will use its discretion in cases of unavoidable absence for reason such as prolonged illness, bereavement etc.
• 85 - 90% attendance - school intervention letters / meeting with parents – consider Penalty Notice or Early Help Notification.
• Below 85% - Where the absences have not been authorised consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer and a referral to PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service (PIAS) may be considered. A referral may be considered in the case of unauthorised holiday, even if the overall percentage is not this low.
Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

A pupil's unauthorised absences give cause for concern → School intervention – letter to parents, meeting pupils/parents in school, etc. → Attendance Improved?

- No
- Yes, the case is closed

Does this case need family casework and should be referred into Early Help Notification? – Please check with the Area Inclusion & Attendance Team if you are unsure.

- Yes, Early Help Notification → Case passed on to relevant District Manager for allocation
- No, the case is referred directly to designated School Liaison Officer using Digital Front Door

School receives feedback within 2 weeks from Early Help Worker → Early Help Assessment and Plan agreed → Positive outcomes achieved including improved attendance

- Family need Early Help intervention – Case is forwarded by School Liaison Officer to Early Help Unit for case work
- Meeting in school to decide one of the following three options
  - More school-based intervention is needed - Case is returned to school
  - Legal action is appropriate - Case is passed on to the Enforcement Team
  - No
- Yes, and the case is monitored or closed
**Children Missing Education**
No student should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Head Teacher 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 have 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.

**Lateness**
At MGGS the register is taken at 8.40am and 2.25pm. Students arriving after 8.40am must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception (or Buckland House for Year 12 and 13) where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded, along with how many minutes they are late. The pupil 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.

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

**Authorising Absence**
Only the Head Teacher 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 Head Teacher. The Head Teacher 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.
• Other unavoidable events e.g. sporting fixtures, interviews, driving tests.

*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 Head Teachers can agree 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**

From September 2013 the Department for Education have amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Head Teacher’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.

The Head Teacher 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 Head Teacher’s decision is final and will be confirmed in writing.

Although each request will be considered individually, MGGS 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.

**Penalty Notices (KCC policy)**

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.

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

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.
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).

**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)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

**Penalty 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)

**Change of Year Group**
In very rare circumstances, the school in collaboration with external educational and/or medical professional may decide it is in the best interests of a student to move that student back one year group. This is subject to a place being available. Any decision will be made in collaboration and with the agreement of the parents and other external agencies. Very occasionally a parent may instigate such a conversation. If this is the case, and there is supporting evidence related to attendance alongside agreement from SEN, social work or medical professionals, the parent should
write to the Headteacher requesting a meeting to discuss this matter. There is no guarantee that a place in a different year group can be offered.

### History Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Revised</th>
<th>Revised By</th>
<th>Ratified By Governors</th>
<th>Next Review Date</th>
<th>Time Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2008 KCC Cluster Policy</td>
<td>KCC</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>April 2011</td>
<td>Every 3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2011</td>
<td>H Magee</td>
<td>23 November 2011</td>
<td>September 2014</td>
<td>Every 3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2015</td>
<td>P Horstrup</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>April 2018</td>
<td>Every 3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2017 (new KCC model policy adopted) Updated May 2017</td>
<td>C Binks</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>January 2020</td>
<td>Every 3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2019</td>
<td>C Binks</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>March 2022</td>
<td>Every 3 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following appendices are KCC model letters, to be adapted by MGGS as required.

Appendix 1  Late letter (Code L)
Appendix 2  Late letter (Code U)
Appendix 3  Absence Letter
Appendix 4  School Attendance Meeting Letter
Appendix 5  School Letter Warning re: Penalty Notice Referral
Appendix 6  Unauthorised absence confirmation of PN request
Appendix 7a Response to Leave Request (Not Authorising)
Appendix 7b Response to Leave Request submitted retrospectively (Not Authorising)
Appendix 8  Unauthorised leave confirmation of PN request
Appendix 9  School letter where they believe a holiday was taken
Appendix 10 Traveller Attendance letter
Appendix 11 Traveller Absence due to travelling
Appendix 1

Dear «salutation»

Re «forename» «surname»

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has been arriving late at school. Below for your information is a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was late (Code L):

Total lates before registration closed: «total_lates_before» half day sessions

At our school the register is taken at ?? am and at ?? pm.

A pupil’s lateness will seriously disrupt their learning and can be embarrassing for your child.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve punctuality. If we can help in any way, perhaps via our School Nurse or Family Liaison Officer, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher
Appendix 2

Dear «salutation»

Re «forename» «surname»

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has arrived after the register has been closed. Below for your information is a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was late (Code U):

Total lates after registration closed: «total_lates_after» half day sessions

At our school the register is taken at ?? am and is closed at ?? am for the morning session and taken again at ?? pm and closed at ?? pm for the afternoon session. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked ‘U’ which records the absence as unauthorised for that session.

Arriving after the register has closed is seriously disrupting your child’s learning and is impacting on their overall attendance.

Persistent late arrival may lead to a referral for a Penalty Notice or a referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for further action and possible prosecution.

If «forename» continues to arrive late after the register has closed we will contact you to arrange a meeting at the school.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher
Appendix 3

Dear «salutation»

Re «forename» «surname»

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has been absent from school. I attach for your information a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was absent.

A pupil’s absence can seriously disrupt their learning, not only do they miss out on teaching while they are away but they are less prepared for future lessons when they return.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve «forename»’s attendance. If we can help in any way, perhaps via our School Nurse or Family Liaison Officer, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher
Appendix 4

Dear «salutation»

Re: «forename» «surname»

Despite previous warnings, I note with concern that your child’s attendance at school has made no significant improvement. «forename»’s attendance at school is currently «percentage_attendance»% which means «he_she» has missed «total_authorised_absences» half day sessions for authorised absence and «total_unauthorised_absences» half day sessions for unauthorised absence. This will have an impact on your child’s education which we cannot ignore.

As there has been no improvement in «forename»’s attendance, I must advise you that further absences from school as a result of illness may require medical evidence (e.g. copy of a prescription, Doctors/Dentist appointment card). If medical evidence is not provided when required, further absences will be marked as unauthorised.

I am inviting you to attend a School Attendance Meeting. The time and date have been set for ?? at ?? It is important that you and «forename» attend this meeting for us to explore the issues around poor attendance. The meeting will be attended by:

??

If this appointment is inconvenient, I would be grateful if you could contact me so that an alternative time can be arranged.

If you do not attend this meeting and «forename»’s absence continues to deteriorate, a referral may be made to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for further action and possible prosecution.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

The School
Appendix 5

Dear «salutation»

Re «forename» «surname»

At our school we consider attendance of utmost importance and I am therefore bringing this information to your attention.

Our monitoring process has shown that «forename» has been absent from school for a total of «total_unauthorised_absences» unauthorised half day sessions. I refer you to legislation regarding Penalty Notices.

‘As from 2005, Kent Local Authority (LA) introduced Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from school of at least 10 sessions (5 days) during any 100 possible school sessions.’ A separate Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent and for each child.

On receipt of the Notice, the penalty will be £120, reduced to £60 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 LA.

Please note this is a warning letter that a Penalty Notice could be requested if a total of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 days) are reached.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact me.

If further unauthorised absence occurs you will be contacted and invited in for a meeting at the school.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher
Appendix 6

Dear «salutation»

Re «forename» «surname»

With reference to our letter dated ??, «forename» has now reached a total of «total_unauthorised_absences» half day sessions of unauthorised absence. As a result we will now be requesting a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority.

A separate Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent and for each child.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher
Appendix 7a

«addressee»

«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Request for leave during Term-Time

For the attention of the parents of «forename» «surname»

I have received your request to take «forename» out of school between ??date and ??date, a total of ??Number of school sessions.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher’s ability to authorise leave of absence except in exceptional circumstances. The School’s Attendance Policy confirms that:

- agreement to each request is at my discretion, acting on behalf of the Governing Body
- each case will be judged on its merits
- my decision is final
- leave cannot be authorised retrospectively

I have considered your request but I am writing to confirm that on this occasion the leave will not be authorised. If you decide to take «forename» out of school I may be making a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of 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 at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher
Appendix 7b

Dear «salutation»

Request for leave during Term-Time

For the attention of the parents of «forename» «surname»

You failed to apply in advance for permission for «forename» to be absent from school.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher’s ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term-time will not be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in “exceptional circumstances”.

The School’s Attendance Policy confirms that:

- agreement to each request is at my discretion, acting on behalf of the Governing Body
- each case will be judged on its merits
- my decision is final
- leave cannot be authorised retrospectively

As stated above, I am unable to authorise leave retrospectively and I will be making a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of 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 at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher
Appendix 8

Name: «forename» «surname»  DOB: «date_of_birth»

With reference to our letter dated ??date, the leave of absence taken between ??date and ??date has now been recorded as Unauthorised Absence and as a result a Penalty Notice has been requested.

A separate Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent and for each child.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher
Appendix 9

Dear "salutation"

Re "forename" "surname"

You failed to apply in advance for permission for "forename" to be absent from school.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence, except in exceptional circumstances. (State why you are treating this absence as a family holiday and/or why there are no exceptional circumstances)

Requests for holidays in term-time will not be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in “exceptional circumstances”.

I am unable to authorise leave retrospectively therefore this absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence, where a child has 10 unauthorised sessions within 100 school sessions a Penalty Notice may be issued.

The Penalty Notice gives you the opportunity to pay a penalty instead of being prosecuted for failing to secure your child’s regular attendance at school. The amount of the penalty is £120 per parent, per child, but if payment is made by you within 21 days of receipt of this Notice it will be £60 per parent, per child. If you pay this penalty within the time limits, no further action will be taken against you in connection with the offence, i.e. your liability for the offence will be discharged.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher
Appendix 10

Dear «salutation»

Traveller Absence

«forename» «surname»

I am writing to say how concerned I am over the number of times «forename» has been absent from school. This academic year «forename» has missed «total_authorised_absences» authorised half day sessions and «total_unauthorised_absences» unauthorised half day sessions achieving an overall attendance rate of «percentage_attendance»%.

Traveller children have to attend school for 380 sessions (190 days) each year, which is the same for all children and you are at risk of being referred to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer if «forename»’s attendance falls below 90%. I am unable to authorise any absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances or if you will be travelling for occupational purposes and agree this with the school in advance.

If you would like to speak to me about «forename»’s attendance, please telephone the school to make an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher
Appendix 11

Dear «salutation»

Traveller Absence

«forename» «surname»

Thank you for contacting me to say that «forename» will be absent from school from ??Date as you will be travelling due to your work.

The law allows me to authorise «forename»’s absence if your trade or business means that you have to travel from place to place. However, you have not let me know when «forename» is likely to return to school. Unless you contact me during the next 10 school days to confirm a date, I will refer «forename» to the Local Authority as a Child Missing Education.

After 20 days absence, there may be grounds to take «forename»’s name off the school roll and you will have to re-apply for a school place when you return.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher