

Lower Halstow School



Attendance Newsletter – Term 1 Every Day Counts – The Importance of Good Attendance

We all know how vital regular school attendance is for a child’s success—not just academically, but socially and emotionally too. Being in school every day helps children build stable friendships, grow in confidence and make steady progress in their learning.

At Lower Halstow, our current attendance stands at 93.8%, which is unfortunately slightly below the national percentage of 94.8%, this represents a small drop compared to last year. While this might seem minor, we’ve again noticed the difference in the well-being and progress of those pupils with less than 90% attendance. This equates to at least a whole month off school and we are only in school for 9 months of the year! In short, 90% is not ‘good’ attendance, it is a cause for concern. To put things into perspective, the table below shows how attendance percentages relate to days missed.

Attendance %	Days Absent (approx.)	What it Means
100%	0 days	Excellent – no learning missed
98%	4 days	Very good – minimal impact
95%	9.5 days	Good – around 2 weeks missed
90%	19 days	Concerning – nearly a month missed
85%	28.5 days	Serious – nearly a whole term missed
80%	38 days	Critical – nearly two terms missed

We understand that illness and other circumstances can sometimes mean children need time off—but we encourage all families to aim for the highest attendance possible, including during times where we may be off-timetable and doing other events. Missing a class Christmas party or the sports day, might seem like it doesn’t matter, but these sort of activities develop other skills and are where shared memories are formed which impact directly on the children’s well-being and sense of belonging.

Trends at our school

You will have noticed that we now regularly include attendance data in our newsletters. Sharing details of attendance generally, individually and common trends is now an expectation within the regulations introduced last year. Therefore, we wanted to share

some key trends from last year with you to ensure everyone is fully informed about the impact in school.

Knowing that childhood illnesses simply can't be avoided, we chose to focus on supporting families where occasional casual absence was the main barrier to good attendance. This worked well, with a marked improvement. Most, not all, of our absence last year was from those unavoidable illnesses such as tonsillitis, chest infections, chicken pox etc. rather than minor coughs and colds and odd days off for other reasons. Unfortunately, the successful effort from everyone to reduce casual absence was offset by a huge increase in term time holidays - up from 30 the year before to 56 last year!

We need to remind everyone that the rules changed last year and holiday absence is now judged on a 3-year basis with fines increasing each time. **We have included an illustration below as a reminder of the new rules and processes.** Please be aware that anyone who took a holiday last year will be subject to an increased fine from the LA if you go on another holiday this academic year.

Another worrying trend was the rise in the number of children identified as persistently absent during monitoring. This rose from 21 pupils to 36 pupils. All these pupils had attendance below 90% and missed at least a month of school during the year. This rise was nearly entirely due to the increase in term time holidays.

This year let's work together so we can help every child make the most of their time in school.

ATTENDANCE CHANGES FROM THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

FROM AUGUST 2024

PER PARENT/CARER, PER CHILD	FIRST OFFENCE	SECOND OFFENCE	THIRD OFFENCE (within a 3 year period)	5 CONSECUTIVE DAYS OF TERM TIME ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL
<p>Penalty Notices will be issued to each parent/carer, for each child that was absent.</p> <p>FOR EXAMPLE</p> <p>3 siblings absent for term time leave Each parent/carer will receive 3 separate fines.</p> <p>5 school days = 10 sessions (AM and PM mark)</p>	<p>The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave or irregular school attendance, the amount will be:</p> <p>£160 per parent/carer, per child, paid within 28 days.</p> <p>REDUCED to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days</p>	<p>The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave of absence or irregular school attendance the amount will be:</p> <p>£160 per parent/carer, per child paid in 28 days</p> <p>(PLEASE NOTE THERE IS NO OPTION FOR A REDUCED AMOUNT ON A SECOND OFFENCE)</p>	<p>The third time an offence is committed for term time leave of absence or irregular school attendance (within a 3 year period) by the same parent/carer, for the same child, a Penalty Notice WILL NOT be issued and the case will be referred to Kent County Council's Attendance Team for PROSECUTION which may result in fines of up to £2500 per parent per child.</p>	<p>Penalty Notices may also be issued for any term time absences that are unauthorised whether these absences are taken consecutively or cumulatively over a rolling period of 10 weeks.</p> <p>All parents/carers are encouraged to inform the school of the absence and the reasons for their child's absence everyday.</p>