



HORNBEAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mongeham Road, Deal, Kent CT14 9PQ

Headteacher: Mrs Harkins | Deputy Headteacher: Mrs Jones

01304 374033 | www.hornbeam.kent.sch.uk | office@hornbeam.kent.sch.uk

Learn to Love Learning to Live Life Better

Tuesday 15th September 2026

Subject: Attendance and Leave Requests

Dear Parents and Carers,

Every day in school matters. Excellent attendance gives children the very best opportunity to achieve academically, build friendships, develop confidence and fully embrace school life.

We understand that family life can sometimes bring challenges, and when difficulties arise, we are committed to working with you to find the right support for your child and family. Open communication and honesty are always valued, and we encourage you to speak to us if attendance becomes a concern.

As we begin the new school year, I would like to clarify the guidance that all schools are required to follow regarding attendance and leave of absence requests.

The Department for Education is clear that family holidays during term time are not usually considered exceptional circumstances. Schools can only authorise leave of absence in genuinely exceptional circumstances, and each request must be considered individually by the Headteacher. As a result, requests for holidays during term time are unlikely to be authorised. More details can be found in our Attendance Policy.

Schools must follow national guidance regarding attendance and Penalty Notices. A Penalty Notice may be considered where a child accumulates 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school-week period. This can include unauthorised holiday absence. Before any Penalty Notice is issued, the school will always seek to understand individual circumstances and work with families to improve attendance wherever possible. Support and communication remain our preferred approach.

Please note that unauthorised leave requests remain on school records for three years. This approach has been in place since September 2025. Multiple periods of unauthorised absence within this three-year timeframe may result in further intervention or action from the Local Authority.

If you are requesting an absence for your child, please submit the details in writing to **office@hornbeam.kent.sch.uk**.





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Attendance Myth Busters

There is often a lot of confusion around attendance rules, so here are a few common myths and the facts behind them:

✗ Myth: The school gets the money from attendance fines.	✓ Fact: Schools do not receive any money from Penalty Notices. Any payment is made directly to the Local Authority. Schools have a legal duty to follow national attendance guidance.
✗ Myth: If my child is doing well, a few days off won't matter.	✓ Fact: Attendance is about much more than academic learning. Children also miss valuable opportunities to develop friendships, routines, confidence and a sense of belonging. Every day counts.
✗ Myth: If I ask in advance, my holiday will be authorised.	✓ Fact: Requesting leave in advance does not automatically mean it can be approved. Headteachers can only authorise absence in exceptional circumstances, and family holidays rarely meet this threshold.
✗ Myth: Medical appointments don't affect attendance.	✓ Fact: Medical appointments are authorised, but wherever possible these should be arranged outside school hours and children should miss the minimum amount of learning time necessary.
✗ Myth: If my child is worried or anxious about school, they should stay at home until they feel ready to return.	✓ Fact: We understand that mental health can affect attendance. The best approach is to speak to us early so we can work together to provide support and help your child maintain a positive connection with school.
✗ Myth: 95% attendance is excellent attendance.	✓ Fact: 95% attendance means around 10 days of learning missed across the year. Small percentages quickly add up, which is why every school day matters.
✗ Myth: But I can have up to 5-day holiday leave each year before I get a penalty notice?	✓ Fact: Unauthorised leave requests remain on school records for three years. Multiple periods of unauthorised absence within this timeframe may result in further intervention or action from the Local Authority.

Yesterday, I introduced the children to Hector the Hedgehog (Hetty's brother!) and explained that each week the class with the strongest or most improved attendance will welcome Hector into their classroom to share in their learning adventures for the week.

At Hornbeam, our aim is always to work in partnership with families. We want every child to be in school, on time, every day, ready to learn, thrive and achieve their very best.

Kind regards,

Mrs S Harkins
Headteacher

