

Kingsleigh Primary School



Pupil Attendance Policy

Date of last review: September 2021

Date of next review: September 2022

Pupil Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Punctuality and regular attendance are crucial to children's achievement at school. Kingsleigh Primary School (KPS) will work in collaboration with parents and carers to ensure that all children benefit from regular attendance. Within school, staff communicate to pupils that their contribution to the school community is valued; furthermore, staff endeavour to make school an enjoyable place to be so that a positive attitude to school and learning is fostered: through this, we aim to ensure that children want to attend school regularly in the first place.

1.2 In law, parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school and are punctual. It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to take seriously problems which may lead to non-attendance.

1.3 KPS will endeavour to:

- Emphasise the positive reasons for full attendance
- Recognise and acknowledge good attendance, including infrequent attendance achieved in very difficult circumstances (e.g. chronic illness)
- Through careful and systematic monitoring of attendance, identify and act upon difficulties at the earliest stage, working closely with parents/carers
- Avoid acrimony and disappointment in connection with requests for absence through clarity and consistency in dealing with children and families

2. Why is regular attendance so vital?

2.1 There is a clear link between low attendance at school and low achievement. Government figures show that attendance level at primary school has a clear impact on achievement, even at the end of secondary school:

- Of pupils who fall below 50% attendance, only 3% will achieve 5 A-C grades at GCSE
- Of pupils in the 80%-90% range, only 35% will achieve 5 A-C grades at GCSE
- Of pupils below 95%, only 73% will achieve 5 A-C grades at GCSE

3. Monitoring attendance and responding to concerns

3.1 All staff have a duty to informally monitor pupils' attendance and to report any concerns they may have. In this way, pupil attendance is being monitored in the school at all times. The school has key staff monitoring attendance.

- Within the office team, The Attendance Officer will:
 - o Ensure that careful records of attendance are maintained;
 - o Provide attendance information as requested by staff and for attendance monitoring meetings and audit;
 - o Make day to day attendance checks on those pupils whose attendance has been identified as requiring regular monitoring and flag concerns quickly;
 - o Ensure the school's arrangements for First Day Contact are robustly followed, always mindful of those children identified as 'vulnerable';
 - o Maintain a close link with the Deputy Head.
- Monitoring of attendance is a continual process and actions may be triggered at any point where a concern is raised.
- Formal internal monitoring will take place by the school bi-weekly through following the agreed actions within this policy.
- Formal monitoring of attendance will include analysis of absence levels for individuals and specific vulnerable groups including disadvantaged children as a cohort compared to other pupils within the school. Such analysis will also consider other trends such as by year group.

3.2 There is a tiered system to respond to low and/or falling attendance levels:

Each fortnight the attendance of all pupils is tracked. For pupils who have attendance below 96%, a Letter 1 is sent. This letter is for information – it notifies the parent/carer of their child’s attendance level and explains that the school will continue to monitor it. (Where the cause for a pupil’s attendance dropping below 96% is very specific and clearly known and evidenced to the school, the school may decide that such a letter is not required or appropriate. In such circumstances, the pupil’s attendance will be closely monitored – further reduction in attendance may prompt this initial letter). This letter is included in appendix 1, although it may be adjusted to suit the circumstances if appropriate.

Following the date of this letter, if attendance does not improve and there are further absences a Letter 2 is sent. This letter is included in appendix 2. The purpose of this letter is to clearly identify that the attendance level is a significant cause for concern (except for in exceptional circumstances such as a known medical condition). Parents/carers are requested to attend a meeting, either by telephone or in person, the purpose of which is to explore the reasons for their child’s low attendance and formulate a plan for improvement. The content of this meeting will be used to draw up an ‘Attendance Action Plan’ which will be shared with the parents/carers with a review date of six weeks and regular weekly reviews, (appendix 3). Participants in that meeting will vary according to the circumstances but may often involve staff such as the Headteacher, other senior leader, class teacher, SENCo and Pastoral Care Worker. The school is likely to invite the Education Social Worker and will certainly notify them of the meeting taking place. At this stage, the school will make it known – and confirm in writing on the Attendance Action Plan - that absences cannot be authorised without medical evidence unless there are exceptional reasons which render this inappropriate. Schools cannot routinely authorise absence where a child’s attendance has reached this level of concern and this will be explored at the meeting. If the parent/carer does not attend the meeting, the Attendance Action Plan will be sent to them with a review date of six weeks. Where families fail to engage with the school or attendance does not improve from the date of the meeting and Attendance Action Plan, a Legal Warning letter is issued with notice to improve attendance. (This is included in appendix 4). This is reviewed after the agreed period of time and if attendance is improving it will continue to be closely monitored and if not the school will request a FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice) from the local authority. If this is not paid, then a prosecution notice will be sought and issued.

NB During the unprecedented times of the Covid-19 pandemic some of these systems and figures may need to be modified so that this policy is still robust and purposeful.

4. Requiring medical evidence

4.1 As described earlier, schools cannot routinely authorise absence where there are attendance concerns. Before requiring parents/carers to provide medical evidence, parents/carers will have been notified in writing along the lines outlined in appendix 3 and 4. This would typically be discussed with the parents/carers at an attendance improvement meeting. Medical evidence may take many forms, depending upon the circumstances. Where a pupil has a specific medical condition which is clearly evidenced to the school (for example through a NHS paediatrician’s letter), this can be taken as evidence for ongoing absences rather than requiring the parents/carers to provide evidence after every absence. However, if there are any doubts, the school will take advice from the Local Authority School Inclusion Worker as it will be necessary to understand the level of attendance that could be reasonably expected with that particular condition. In cases where there is no confirmed underlying health condition, medical evidence can take whatever form the school deems as appropriate and might include: GP appointment card, prescription or even the school’s direct observation. Either way, if a parent/carer is required to provide medical evidence, absences will not be authorised without such evidence.

5. Managing lateness

5.1 If a pupil arrives at school after the start of the school day but by 9.15am, they will be registered as 'late' (L). Lateness beyond 9.15am will be counted as an absence. This will be an unauthorised absence (U) for the morning session unless parents/carers provide the school with an acceptable reason.

5.2 KPS will also contact parents/carers if a child regularly arrives at school late. Teachers and other staff who notice a problem with punctuality will consult with the Headteacher before communication is made with parents/carers regarding the matter. Persistent arrival after the child's designated staggered start time will be addressed as over a week this can build up to over two and a half hours lost learning time and has a significant impact on how children settle and access the school day.

5.3 Persistent lateness will be addressed; 5 periods of lateness will be addressed through a lateness monitoring letter and if ten periods of absence (U code) are recorded a fine will be issued. Lateness will also be monitored under the attendance criteria above.

6. Parents/carers notifying the school of absence and 'first day contact'

6.1 Parents/carers are required to contact their child's school on the first day of their child's absence and every day thereafter. If it is clear from the initial communication on day one that the absence will extend for a given period (for example, a child who has an infectious illness), it is not necessary for the school to be notified every day during the absence period but parents/carers must contact the school if the absence period becomes protracted. This is an important aspect of the schools' safeguarding procedures: if a child is not registered at school in the morning, then schools must satisfy themselves that the child is safe. It is therefore necessary for parents/carers to contact the school every day by telephone, Parent Mail or or email by 9.15am, giving a reason for their child's absence. This absence will then be recorded as authorised, provided that the reason for absence is significant and that there are no current concerns about the child's attendance.

6.2 Office staff will contact parents/carers on the first day that a pupil is absent without explanation. The school will determine how to make this initial contact; it may for example be via text message in the first instance, requesting a call from the parent/carer. If no response is obtained, the school will endeavour to reach the parent/carer by sending a truancy email and call. It may also be that the school will telephone the parent/carer and in some circumstances a home visit will be made.

6.3 If the Headteacher has any cause for concern about the reason given for any absence, it will remain unauthorised until the matter has been discussed with the parents/carers and a satisfactory explanation secured. If the school does not accept the reason given the absence will remain unauthorised. For the absence to be authorised, there must have been no reasonable way in which the child could have come to school.

7. Appointments during the day

7.1 Parents/carers must avoid arranging appointments for their child during the day. However, if it is unavoidable, parents/carers must notify the school of the appointment details. A child should only be taken out of school for his/her own appointment—not because another family member has an appointment. This includes collecting a child early so a parent/carer can attend an appointment for someone else.

8. Leave of Absence during term time

8.1 Following amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 which came into effect 1st September 2013, Headteachers are only allowed to grant leave of absence

from school in exceptional circumstances. The decision as to whether any request is considered as 'exceptional circumstances' rests solely with the Headteacher.

8.2 The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short; 'unavoidable' should be taken to mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

8.3 In considering whether or not to authorise a request for exceptional leave of absence in term time the Headteacher will look at each individual case and only grant authorisation if the circumstances are truly exceptional. Additionally, any request should be made prior to the leave of absence and should be submitted to the school in writing. Parents/Carers may be asked to provide additional information/evidence or meet with the school to discuss the circumstances.

8.4 Only the parent/carer the child resides with can make an application for a leave of absence.

8.5 The following are examples of situations which could be considered as exceptional:

- Return of parent/carer from active service (Forces)
- Death or terminal illness of a parent/carer, step-parent or sibling
- Young Carers
- Disability or respite leave
- Periods of obligatory religious observance
- Attendance at a wedding or christening of an immediate family member ('immediate' defined as parents and siblings)

8.6 The following are examples of situations which would not typically be considered as exceptional:

- Family holiday / cheaper holiday dates
- Educational visits arranged by family members during school time
- Attendance at a wedding or christening (unless it relates to immediate family)
- Visiting relatives either abroad or in the UK
- Limitations on parents'/carers' leave entitlement or dates or parents'/carers' profession or place of work making it difficult to coincide school and work holidays
- A family member going for medical treatment abroad which could be reasonably carried out in the UK

8.7 Parents/carers will be notified of the Headteacher's decision at the earliest opportunity.

8.8 When a leave of absence is taken and the school has not authorised the absence because the reasons are not considered 'exceptional', the school may request that the Local Authority issues a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN). In considering whether to request a FPN, the school will have due regard to the latest advice and guidance. If a period of 5 or more days unauthorised absences is taken KPS will request that the Local Authority issue a FPN. All FPN fines will be requested on a, "per parent, per child" basis.

8.9 KPS will make parents/carers aware of the arrangements for requesting leave of absence, including the implications of taking unauthorised absence, through publication of this policy on the school's websites and also through other opportunities including information packs for new parents/carers and regular newsletters.

9. Off-site education or specialist provision

9.1 Where a child's special educational needs are recognised by the school, and special tuition/therapy not available in school is required, the Headteacher may authorise absence for specific times when such tuition or therapy may be given outside school.

10. Absence for performance

10.1 The Headteacher may grant leave of absence for approved public performances provided that clear evidence is issued of the approved nature of this activity. The following will also be taken into account in reaching a decision:

- The nature and purpose of the performance

- The frequency of absence requested and the likely impact on the child's education and progress
- The child's attendance record

Appendix 1

Dear

Through our regular monitoring of attendance at Kingsleigh Primary School, we have noticed that _____ has an attendance of _____ which is below the government's minimum expectation of 96%.

I know that you will appreciate that regular attendance at school is vitally important for children to learn effectively and make good progress; it is essential that they attend on time, regularly and consistently. We appreciate that some absence may be due to illness or medical appointments, but all absences and late arrivals to school affect a child's attendance, performance and ability to achieve their full potential.

At this time, there may not be any cause for worry and if you believe _____'s attendance will soon improve and be closer to the 96% that is expected you need take no further action.

If, however, you do have concerns about your child's attendance for health, or other reasons, please contact Mrs Belmont in the school office to make an appointment to discuss your concerns with the school.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Lumber
Headteacher

Appendix 2

Dear

I wrote to you recently to express our concerns over _____'s attendance. _____'s attendance has continued to be a concern to us. His/Her current attendance is at _____ which is below the minimum requirement of 96%.

We appreciate that this may be, at times, due to illness but all absences and late arrivals to school affect a child's attendance and their performance and ability to achieve their full potential in school.

In view of these concerns, we would like to invite you into school to discuss the reasons for _____'s absence and see if there is anything we can do to support you in improving his/her attendance. A telephone meeting has been arranged for _____ and our Education Social Worker and Pastoral Worker will telephone you at approximately ___ am/pm.

We look forward to working together with you to resolve this matter and ensure that your child can get the very most out of their time at Kingsleigh Primary School.

Mr J Lumber
Headteacher

Attendance Action Plan**Part 1**

Name: _____ Date of Telephone Meeting: _____

Year group: _____ Class: _____ Time of Telephone Call: _____

Details of attendance

Overall %	Authorised absence %	Unauthorised absence %

Details of professionals involved; including staff at school

Name of professional	Role and Agency	Attended Meeting

Background information

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What is going well?

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What are we concerned about?

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Part 2 – Agreed Actions

	Actions/next steps of Parent(s) and Pupil	Date / Frequency
1		
2		
3		

	Actions/Support from professionals to assist parent(s)/pupil	Date / Frequency
1		
2		
3		

I understand that following this meeting no absences will be authorised without medical evidence and that if attendance does not improve it is possible that Legal Warning will be given and the possibility of a Penalty Notice or legal action proceedings being sort.

Review date: Six weeks from the meeting date above with regular weekly school attendance monitoring and if necessary Penalty Notice or legal action proceedings could be taken before this time.

Part 3 - Declarations

I agree with the actions and support laid out in this action plan.

Parent: _____

Pupil (if appropriate): _____

School Representative: _____

Appendix 4

Dear

I am writing to you about my concerns over _____ poor attendance at school.

Pupils are expected to attend school 96% of the time. _____'s attendance so far this year is at _____ considerably lower than the minimum expectation. Please note from this point forward, the school will require medical evidence for any of _____'s absences. Without suitable evidence, all absences will be recorded as unauthorised.

In light of these concerns, I am writing to inform you that there will now be 15/30 days monitoring period. Should _____'s attendance not improve to 96% in the next 15/30 days I will pass the matter to the Local Authority for consideration of prosecution proceedings under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for the offence of failure to secure regular attendance at school of a registered pupil. If convicted of this offence, you may be fined up to £1000 and you will hold a criminal record.

However, Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 allows the Authority to issue a Penalty Notice under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, to each parent/carer with responsibility for _____ in respect of the offence. A Penalty Notice offers a person the opportunity to discharge any liability to conviction for the offence under Section 444(1) to which the notice relates, by payment in accordance with the notice.

Should a Penalty Notice be considered the most appropriate action in these circumstances, the fine for each parent/carer for each child would be £60 if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid within 28 days.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Lumber
Headteacher