

Attendance Policy

This policy reflects the vision and values of Kingsley Primary School.

At Kingsley Primary School, all staff work collaboratively to encourage every pupil to strive for excellence. Every child will be supported, challenged and valued. One way in which we strive to do this is by encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their maximum potential. We are determined in encouraging the development of high self-esteem and for our children to take pride and ownership of their learning. In conjunction with this, we will continuously provide a clear framework for parents and staff as well as clear procedures for involving parents and/or external agencies where appropriate.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available on the school website to all parents/carers of pupils that are registered at our school.

Kingsley Primary School encourages all parents/carers to work in partnership with the school in order to improve attendance and punctuality and recognises that ***"parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly"*** (DfE 1999).

Aims & Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance. Our expectation for attendance is a minimum of 96% for all pupils, apart from those with chronic health issues.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception age children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the School Attendance Support Service so that all pupils can achieve their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.

Attendance is a national priority and all schools have to submit data electronically (both in an aggregated form and on an individual pupil basis) every term. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance and high examination performance.

Responsibility of Parents/Carers

It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure their children receive appropriate education. Failing to send your child to school regularly without good reason is a criminal offence. If you take your child out of school for an accumulative total of 5 days or more (10 sessions) (83.33%) over a period of six weeks, the school will deem this as irregular attendance and will consider a referral to the Local authority for consideration of legal action.

Legal action that may be taken includes:

- **Issuing penalty notices:** Each parent receives a penalty notice for each child who has unauthorised absence. The penalty is £60 or £120 depending on how soon payment is made. So, if there are two parents and two children the total penalties could be up to £480. Failure to pay may result in prosecution.
- **Taking parents to court for unauthorised absence:** Education Act 1996 Section 444(1) court can fine each parent up to £1000 per child, order payment of prosecution costs and/or impose a Parenting Order.
- **Taking parents to court for persistent unauthorised absence:** Education Act 1996 Section 444(1A) - court can fine each parent up to £2,500 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs, impose a Parenting Order and/or sentence you to a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

Being taken to court could result in you having a criminal record.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning. You can find more information here:

[Attendance and behaviour advice for parents | West Northamptonshire Council \(westnorthants.gov.uk\)](http://westnorthants.gov.uk)

Punctuality

It is the parent/carers responsibility:

- To ensure that their children arrive to school on time at 8:45am. Both KS1 and KS2 doors open at 8:45am until 8:55am. This is sufficient time for all pupils to get to their classroom.
- Children who are late after 9:00am report to the school office to sign in. Records are kept of the pupils that are late with an L code in the register. Any child that arrives after 9:30am will be marked with a U code, equivalent to an unauthorised absence.
- To ensure children are collected promptly at the end of the school day and that necessary arrangements are in place for the journey home. If these differ from the child's normal arrangements, the class teacher and school office should be made aware

of this.

- The first few minutes of school is a crucial time for children to get settled into class. When a child arrives late for school, it not only disrupts the rest of the class, but they miss out on this crucial time.
- Being punctual is an important life skill. Ensuring that your child is punctual gets them into good habits for their future.
- Arriving just 5 minutes late every day equals 3 days of education over the whole year. Arriving half an hour late every day is equivalent to 18 days absence.

Absences

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To notify the school on the first day of absence before 9:15 am or as soon as possible. Parents can report an absence by telephoning the school office 01604 713822 or emailing kingsley-office@kps.inmat.org.uk
- To provide medical evidence where possible, on the child's return to school.
- To ensure that as far as possible, medical appointments are arranged for outside school hours. Where this is not possible, parents are expected to provide evidence of the appointment in advance, and the child should attend school before/after the appointment.
- To liaise with the school as soon as possible regarding any specific issues that might cause absence or lateness, e.g. a sick parent/carer.

Parents/carers of children for whom we do not know the reason for absence will be contacted by 9:30am.

Authorised Absences

The Department for Children and Families (DCSF) has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- When a child is ill or receiving medical attention.
- Days of religious observance notified in advance.
- Absence due to family circumstances (e.g bereavement, serious illness).
- Lateness due to student living outside the catchment area. Consideration will be made as to whether parents choose to reside outside the catchment area when deciding if an absence is authorised.

There are other absences, such as "Approved Sporting Activity" that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised. This will be at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those where:

- No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/ carers.
- The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The DFE guidelines state that the following activities would classify as unauthorised:

- minding the house
- caring for relatives
- awaiting repair people
- shopping
- a birthday or family celebration
- unauthorised holiday
- parental illness
- excessive illness without a medical reason

The DFE's guidelines look at the area of "Special Occasions" and make clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised. This will be decided at the discretion of the Headteacher.

We ask parents to notify the school well in advance (preferably 4 weeks notice) of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not.

The DFE's guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the **school** that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. A note from home therefore does not automatically make an absence valid/justified/authorised.

Example of 'exceptional circumstances' include:

- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling - Headteachers should use their discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence - up to a maximum of 3 days.
- Serious illness of a close relative - only if Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement
- Time-off relating to Child Entertainment Performances, subject to a license being issued by Education
- Social Work Service
- Religious observance - The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs". This would include the Islamic Eids, as well as religious observance days of the orthodox Christian, Jewish and other religions.
- Headteachers may specify that only one day will be authorised at a time
- Weddings of parents and siblings - weddings can be arranged at weekends or during school holidays; however, we acknowledge that there are times when the dates are dependent on other factors, such as the needs of the couple getting married. Leave

should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time. In difficult family situations the Headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave, for example where natural parents are separated, and in new relationships and it may cause a child further difficulty if he/she is excluded from a wedding. Each case should be addressed on its individual merits, considering the overall welfare of the child.

Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Pilgrimages by parents (eg. Hajj). These are rare but can result in children being away from school for significant periods of time (at least 5 days). They are not regarded as exceptional as children themselves do not perform Hajj, but tend to travel with their parents when they go.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitment.
- To care for other family members
- Birthdays
- To interpret for other family members
- No school uniform/shoes
- Bullying
- Friendship problems
- Head lice
- Learning difficulties
- Family holiday
- Family Anniversaries
- Death of a pet
- Travel problem

Reducing persistent and severe absence

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.

Procedures when a child is absent?

If a pupil is absent, all schools have a responsibility to contact the parent or carer **on the first day of absence** and continue to make every effort to locate the pupil. When it is identified a child is not in school, the procedure below will be followed.

Day 1 - Phone call by 9:30am. Email if no response from parents/carers.

Day 2 - Follow up phone call. Email if no response from parents/carers.

Day 3 - Write/email parents/carers

Write or email to the parents/carers, asking for contact to be made with the school immediately, giving 3 working days to make contact.

Within 5 days - home visit

If the child has not been seen and the parents or carers have not made contact with either, schools must report to the Local Authority, the child as missing from education.

Illness/Medical absences

In addition to the points above, if a child is repeatedly absent due to illness, the school will request medical evidence for further absences. This can take the form of a GP appointment card, a consultant letter, a copy of a prescription, etc.

The school will automatically request medical evidence for any illness absence taken immediately before or after a school holidays.

Absence for Holidays

Parents/carers are expected to take their children on holiday during the school holidays to minimise the impact of missing education.

If there are exceptional circumstances, parents/carers must complete a leave of absence request form in advance of the trip (ideally at least 4 weeks prior).

These requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Headteacher, and they will use their discretion whilst applying government recommendations.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To obtain a leave of absence form from the school office.
- To complete and submit the form in advance of the period of absence (ideally 4 weeks prior).

If parents/carers decide to take a holiday without the Headteachers' authorisation, the child's absences will be marked as unauthorised. **Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued by School Attendance Support Service for unauthorised holiday absence during term time, payable direct to the Local Authority. The Penalty Notice is £120 per parent/adult for each student to be paid within 28 days, decreasing to £60 if paid within 21 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority may instigate legal proceedings under section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty of an offence under this Act, parents will receive a criminal record and could be fined up to £1000.**

Absence for Other Reasons

Absences for reasons such as religious observance or close family bereavement may be authorised by the Headteacher. These requests must be discussed with the school.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To inform the office, in writing, of the need for leave in circumstances which are known in advance.
- To inform the school as soon as possible when sudden circumstances occur which prevent a family bringing a child to school, so that the appropriate code can be recorded in the register.

Unexplained Absence

When a child is repeatedly absent and no satisfactory reason is given, the parent/carers will be investigated and may be liable for prosecution and/or a fine from the Local Authority.

Regular monitoring is carried out by the member of senior leadership team responsible for attendance. Children who have repeated unauthorised absences, holidays or otherwise, will be contacted by the school and may be invited in to an attendance meeting to discuss absences and any appropriate support.

Named senior leader with responsibility for attendance:

Lynne D'alessio Assistant Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead
attendance@kps.inmat.org.uk

Role of the SLT with responsibility for attendance

- To investigate absence which exceeds more than 10%, and to hold meetings with these parents as required.
- To investigate lateness which exceeds more than 5%.
- To investigate any unexplained absence which exceeds more than 5 consecutive days.
- To ensure parents are aware of their legal duty under the Education Act to ensure their children attend school.
- To refer cases to the Local Authority for prosecution where persistent absenteeism has not improved despite thorough intervention and support from the school
- To report accurate whole school and individual attendance data when required.

Children Missing in Education

If a child is absent (unexplained) for at least 5 consecutive days, the School Attendance Support Service will be notified. A home visit may be carried out. If the absence continues for a total of 10 days, the family will be referred as a CME case for the Local Authority.

Persistent Latecomers

Children who repeatedly attend school late after 9:00am will be brought to the attention of the senior leader responsible for attendance. Warning letters will be issued to the parents/carers of these children.

Parents/carers should note that children who arrive late after 9:30am are given a 'U' code, which is the equivalent of an unauthorised absence and this will affect the child's attendance figures. Fixed penalty notices may be issued to parents/carers whose children persistently arrive after this time.

Promoting attendance

Class attendance figures are shared in assemblies on a weekly basis. The class with the highest attendance each week receive the attendance cup. Attendance is discussed with parents/carers during termly parents evenings and the importance of the attendance is highlighted. Information about attendance is communicated on the school website and on DOJO.

Home visits

There may be times where the school staff will carry out home visits if they are concerned with a pupil's absences or they are checking on the welfare of a child. Home visits will be carried out on all children that are missing in education.

Children not collected from school

Class teachers to know which children from Year 5 and 6 have parental permission to walk home on their own.

Child not collected at 3:15pm. Children remain with class teacher until 3:30pm. Still no collection, teacher to escort child to the office area and notify office staff. Office staff to contact parent and then emergency contacts if necessary. Child supervised by school staff until 3:45pm.

No contact made by 3:45pm: Safeguarding leads/ Headteacher informed. DSL to take child to Oscars after school club for supervision and parent to be charged. Information gathered as to status of child (i.e. LAC, CIN, CP, not known to services etc.).

4:30pm: Still no contact from parents: Social care contacted for advice/ support. DSL/ DDSL to remain in school until child is collected by either parent, emergency contact or social careworkers. If the child is taken into the care of Social Care, they will take the responsibility for tracing the parents / carers and feeding back to school the outcomes of the situation. Children's Social Care: 0300 126 7000