

Kingsweston School

Attendance Policy

RATIONALE

At Kingsweston School we believe that all pupils benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular school attendance. In order to achieve this we will take appropriate action to ensure that all pupils achieve the maximum possible attendance and that any problems, which may impede full attendance, are acted on as quickly as possible.

AIMS

- To improve the overall attendance of pupils at school.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- To provide support, advice and guidance about attendance and punctuality to parents and pupils.
- To be systematic in our approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- To further develop positive and consistent communication about attendance and punctuality between home and school.
- To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Officer and with other services and agencies.
- To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.
- To deal with extenuating circumstances appropriately showing sensitivity and understanding.

Parental Responsibility

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. The school expects that parents will:

- Inform a member of staff of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.
- Endeavour to keep health appointments and holidays out of school hours.
- Seek permission from the school for any leave of absence.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. We encourage attendance by:

- Consistent, clear communication with parents and pupils about the importance of regular, prompt, attendance.
- Giving parents details on attendance in our newsletters.
- Discussing attendance with parents at consultation evenings, with the current percentage attendance being reported.
- Reporting to parents on their child's attendance within the annual school report.
- Celebrating individual attendance in terms 2, 4 and 6.

School Responsibility

The Head teacher and Safeguarding and Pastoral Lead hold responsibility for attendance matters, supported by the class teachers and administrative staff. Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed using the SIMS Attendance module. It is a statutory duty for class teachers to call and maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents. Class teachers are legally responsible for marking their register twice per day at the start of each session.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply. In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. Where a pattern of non-attendance is emerging a home visit is carried out to support parents/carers to work with school to help resolve the difficulties. Where there is no response to school intervention and where the absence or pattern of absence has persisted without explanation the school can refer to the Education Welfare Service. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) liaises with the school regarding absences following contact with the parents.

Types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental/therapeutic appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- a child refusing to get up in the morning

Absence Procedures

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.30am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence. Calls from parents regarding absence are logged. After this time registers are updated accordingly.

If your child is absent:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 8.45am. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call.
- Or call into school and report to reception.
- You may hand a written note to your child's bus escort if appropriate.

If your child is absent we will:

- Make contact, if we have not heard from you, to ascertain the reason for absence; please note we will pass on any concerns we have regarding your child's attendance to social care if we have additional safeguarding concerns or if the pupil is a child in care.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the EWO if attendance does not improve, pupils' falling below 85% attendance are regularly reviewed with the EWO on a termly basis.

If a child is persistently absent due to medical reasons and their attendance falls below 87%, the school may ask to see evidence of the child's attendance at the doctors in order to authorise the absence. Medical evidence may also be requested before authorisation of absence of more than three days due to illness or medical appointments.

Requests for Leave of Absence during term time

Families do not have a right to take their children out of school for the purposes of family holidays or trips abroad. Government Guidance instructs Head teachers NOT to authorise leave of absence in term time. Permission for this type of absence should only be granted in the most exceptional circumstances.

Requests for Leave of Absence during Term Time should be made to the Head teacher using the Leave of Absence Request Form (See Annex 1, available from the school office and website). Each request will be judged on a case by case basis.

Periods of absence during term time are strongly discouraged due to the inevitable disruption caused to learning. The school's policy is to authorise absence only in exceptional circumstances and only for pupils whose attendance in the previous 12 months is above 95%.

Exceptional circumstances include

- Illness or medical appointments which cannot be made outside school hours
- Religious observance (to a maximum of 3 days in the school year)
- Compassionate leave, bereavement
- School visits or exams
- Sporting events which have a significant contribution to the child's life

When an application is made for authorised absence during term time, the Head teacher gives consideration to:

- The nature of the parent's wishes
- The timing of the proposed absence
- The attendance pattern in the present and previous academic years
- The current attendance percentage
- The child's progress

Applications for leave must be made at least 1 month in advance (unless an exceptional circumstance such as in the event of a bereavement). The Head teacher will review applications made and in making a decision will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. The Head teacher has full authority to grant or deny a request based upon previous attendance and potential impact on the child's attainment.

We will not agree leave of absence from school during term time under the following circumstances:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below 95% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking leave of absence.
- During exam and assessment periods.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and could be subject to sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. Research undertaken by the Department of Education show that holidays taken in term time have a serious negative effect on a student's progress and achievement. When a holiday is taken and the Head Teacher has not authorised the absence, it will be marked in the register as an "unauthorised absence".

Lateness (for parents who bring their children to school)

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work as well as vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

The school day starts at: 8.25 at Oasis Brightstowe; 8.40am at Napier Miles; 8.50 at Shirehampton and 9am at our Ashley Down provision, we expect our children to be in school before this time. The class registers will close half an hour after the start time for each school site. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Assistant Head or Safeguarding and Pastoral Lead to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Annex 1

ABSENCE REQUEST FORM (exceptional circumstances only)

To: *The Head teacher*

I wish to apply to have an 'avoidable' absence authorised, for:

Child's name Class/Year

Date from date to(inclusive)

Signature of Parent/Carer:

Please fully explain the exceptional circumstances that you would like the school to consider. This section must be completed. Please continue on a separate sheet if needed.

Office use only			<input type="checkbox"/> Absence authorised Code ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Absence unauthorised
Date form received	No of school days absence requested	% Attendance	
			Signed _____ Headteacher

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This portion to be returned to parents/carers

Please note that even if this absence request is authorised you may still receive letters of concern from either the school or Local Authority if your child's attendance drops below a level deemed acceptable,

Pupil name:

Absence authorised fromto (Inclusive)

Absence unauthorised

Current attendance % as of/...../20.....

Signed (Head teacher) Date.....

NOTES TO PARENTS/CARERS

The law does not grant parents/carers an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time. If the request is for an absence in term time you must have Parental Responsibility and be the parent/carer with whom the child normally lives. Permission **must** be sought in **advance**. If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the school, the authorising of the absences will be conditional on the child attending satisfactorily up to the date covered by this request.

Warning: If the school refuses your request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. A significant amount of unauthorised absence may make you liable to a Penalty Notice for each child, payable by each parent/carer, or the subject of court proceedings which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

AVOIDABLE ABSENCE IN TERM-TIME

IMPORTANT: Please read carefully the information below.

WARNING: If you allow your child to miss school in term time for an avoidable reason without obtaining the prior approval of the school, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice* per parent per child, or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 Education Act 1996.

As a parent/carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason.

THE FACTS	THE LAW
<p>School aged pupils in Bristol maintained schools are expected to attend punctually on the 190 days that the school is open. Whilst there are a number of unavoidable reasons why a pupil might be away from school (illness, medical appointments, etc.), the legislation is clear that any avoidable absence may only be authorised by a school if there are exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>WHAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER</p> <p>Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed. This may affect test results and can be particularly harmful if the child is undertaking accredited courses.</p> <p>If the school is unable to authorise the absence and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and you may receive a £60* fine per parent for each child.</p>	<p>The law allows schools to consider individual requests to authorise a future avoidable absence. However before the school can authorise any such requests, they must satisfy themselves that there are exceptional circumstances which justify such a decision. It is entirely the responsibility of the parent submitting the request to provide sufficient information/evidence in order to establish this fact. The request for leave must come from a parent with whom the child normally resides</p> <p>If a child then stays away from school for more than the authorised period this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and could be quoted in a prosecution for poor attendance.</p> <p>If the child is away from school for a total of four weeks or more, the school may have the option to take the child off roll subject to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.</p> <p>In the case of unexpected extended absence, it is advisable that the parent fully informs the school as to the reasons. If a child is removed from roll, there is no guarantee that the child will regain a place at the school.</p>

<p>Unavoidable absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genuine illness • Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible) • Days of religious observance • Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces • External examinations • Breavement/funeral 	<p>Other examples of absence from school that <u>will not</u> be authorised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any type of shopping • Looking after siblings or unwell parents • Birthdays
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Please contact your child's Head teacher/Assistant Head if you wish to discuss this issue.

The law requires parents to ensure their children receive an efficient full time education. Please help them not to miss any of this valuable time.

*Penalty Notice £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days and before 28 days