**Attendance Policy**

| **Approved and adopted by School** | January 2016 |
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| **Updated** | November 2019 |
| **Responsible Person** | Headteacher |
| **Responsible Committee** | Finance Committee |
| **Next Review** | September 2020 |

**Rationale / Statement of Intent:**

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Our aims for attendance are to ensure all children attend school and for the school to have rigorous systems in place to ensure this so that all pupils are safe.At Kingsham Primary School we believe that pupils can only take full advantage of their education if their attendance at school is punctual and regular.Optimum levels of attendance can only be achieved when responsibility is accepted and shared by all stakeholders.

Kingsham Primary School is responsible for supporting and monitoring the attendance of our pupils and will work with parents where there are difficulties which may lead to non-attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

* regular and punctual attendance is essential for effective learning
* statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 96%
* regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
* regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
* regular attenders find learning more satisfying
* regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

**Promoting Good Attendance & Punctuality**

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and child. The Home/School agreement will contain details of how we, as a school, work with parents/carers and our expectations of what parents/carers will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

* Provide regular information on all matters related to attendance
* Report to parents/carers on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
* Celebrate and reward good attendance

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

A member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will take a lead on promoting regular and improved attendance. They will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school and that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will identify attendance issues at an early stage and make sure that support is put in place to manage any difficulties.

They will also manage parental requests to withdraw their child from learning for an extended period in term time. This will be carried out in line with Local Authority policies and procedures.

If absence is frequent or continuous, the need and reasons for their child’s absence will be discussed with the parents/carers in order to encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. If a child’s attendance is low and the school has concerns then we may ask for medical evidence to support any further absences. If necessary the school will work with the school nurse and parent to ensure the child attends as regularly as possible and that the impact on their education is kept to a minimum.

A note from the child’s home does not mean that an absence becomes authorised. The decision as to whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school.**

**Responsibilities of the Teaching Staff:**

* Ensure that all children are registered accurately
* Promote and reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities
* Liaise with the SLT on matters of attendance and punctuality
* Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child’s absence

**Responsibilities of the Administrative Staff:**

* Check all school message systems and answer all calls from parents/carers about pupil absence
* Record reasons for absence and update class registers
* Record the names and the reasons of pupils arriving late
* Carry out and record the outcome of calls when a child doesn’t arrive at school and when no reason has been received

**Responsibilities of the Local Authority:**

In order to safeguard all children, all schools including academies must work with their Local Authority to ensure that all children registered to a school attend on a regular basis. Schools are legally bound to follow up on absences and to raise any concerns that they have about a child’s attendance or punctuality to the Local Authority. At this point it becomes the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure the child attends school by whatever means they deem is appropriate.

**Responsibilities of the Parents/Carers:**

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring that their children regularly attend the school at which they are registered and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

* Ensure pupils arrive at school on time
* inform the school on the first and every day of absence
* discuss any planned absence well in advance
* support their child aiming for 100% attendance each year or at least 96%
* avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
* only request to withdraw their child from learning if it is for an exceptional circumstance
* ensure that the school has up-to-date contact details at all times
* work in partnership with the school and external agencies to promote good attendance and punctuality

**Recording Attendance**

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is at the start of the school day at 8.40am and again for the afternoon session at 1pm. Kingsham Primary School will ensure that all legal requirements are met in recording attendance and punctuality, giving high priority to the safeguarding of each individual.

**Lateness/Punctuality:**

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. Children who are late can miss work and valuable time with their class teacher getting vital information, disrupt the lesson for others, and can be embarrassed, potentially leading to further absence.

Our school day is set out below and the coding that the school uses to record all children’s attendance falls in line with county and the Department for Education (DfE) guidance.

* The school day starts at 8.40am.
* **All children are expected to be in the school playground and in their class lines at this time. Once all classes are in from the playground the doors will be closed and any child arriving after this must enter through the main school office.** Morning registration is at 8.40am and it closes at 9.10am. Any child who arrives between these times will be recorded as late during registration - coded ‘L’.
* All lateness is recorded daily. The information will be required by the courts should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
* All arrivals after the close of registration at 9.10am will be marked as ‘late after registration closes’, this is classed as an unauthorised absence (coded U), This mark shows the pupil is on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
* If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded ‘M’. Please be advised **notification** **in advance and proof** of the appointment is needed to authorise these absences. Where possible doctors and dentist appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Children who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered an unauthorised absence.

Parents/carers of children who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good timekeeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents/carers will be invited to attend the school to discuss the problem, and support will be offered. If the support is not appropriate or declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of lateness recorded in the academic year any further occasions of lateness will be marked as unauthorised absences and therefore have an effect on the child’s overall attendance. Continuing lateness may lead to the Local Authority issuing a penalty notice in accordance with their policy.

**What to do if a child is absent**

**Reporting the absence**

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a child is absent the parents/carers must:

* Contact the school as soon as possible on each day of absence via telephone or the front office. The school cannot assume that a child may still be ill just because they were ill the day before. It is the parent/carers duty to keep the school informed every day.

If a child is absent the school will:

* Telephone the parent/carer on each day of absence if we have not received a message; this is because the school has a duty to ensure every child’s safety as well as their regular school attendance.
* Invite the parents/carers in to discuss the situation if the absences persist

**Third Day Absence**

If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers after three days of absence the school is required to start ‘child missing in education’ procedure~~s~~ as set down by County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquires to known friends and wider family.

**Ten Days’ Absence**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any child(ren) who are absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parents/carers, then the Local Authority is notified that the child is ‘at risk of missing’. Children’s Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

**Persistent Absence**

If a child misses 10% (3 weeks / 21 sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **persistent absentees.** Persistent absence will always be monitored and tackled.

**Pupils with Medical Needs or Exceptional Circumstances**

The school will maintain regular contact with the parents/carers, gaining up to date knowledge on the situation regarding the child’s absence, as well as making sure that work is sent home that the child is able to access as appropriate. Cases where a pupils’ medical needs, or there are exceptional circumstances that, effect regular attendance will always be discussed with and dealt with by the Headteacher and the SENCO.

Supporting a pupil after a significant period of absence requires careful planning. Pupils returning after a significant period of absence will be supported on return to school.

**Request to withdraw a child from Learning in Term Time:**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013:

**(Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that Headteacher’s may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** It is important to note that Headteacher’s can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional’ are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. **There are no rules on this** as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday **and in all cases holiday will not be authorised.** Parents/Carers wishing to withdraw their child from learning, need to apply to the Headteacher in advance using the Withdrawal from Learning Request Form before making any travel arrangements.

If a withdrawal from learning is taken without prior permission from the school or for an extended period than requested, the period will **be unauthorised.** This could lead to a referral to the Local Authority and the parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the Local Authority’s code.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child’s schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to support their child by not taking them out during school time.

**Understanding types of absence – Authorised & Unauthorised:**

Children are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an ***exceptional reason*** for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

* Authorised Absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
* Unauthorised Absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child’s withdrawal from learning after a parent’s/carer’s request. This includes:
  + parents/carers giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
  + truancy before or during the school day
  + absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where parents/carers state that a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

**Monitoring and dealing with Poor Attendance**

The school has devised a set procedure to monitor the attendance of all of its pupils and to resolve any issues that may occur. The school Attendance Officer will;

* Check all registers every day and add all lateness, sicknesses and unauthorised absences.
* Monitor overall attendance percentage of each pupil along with the number of reoccurring sick days, medical appointments and lateness.
* Issue attendance letters to all parents, without exception, at the end of each half term to highlight their child’s attendance for that half term. These letters will show whether a child’s attendance;

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Green | Excellent | 100% Attendance |
| Amber | Good | Between 96% to 99.9% Attendance |
| Red | Cause for Concern | Below 96% Attendance |

* If the attendance of any child falls below 90% the parent will be invited to an attendance meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership team to discuss ways of improvement.
* If no improvement is reached the case will be forwarded to the Pupil Entitlement Office at the Local Authority.
* Once a case has been referred to the Pupil Entitlement Office the school will no longer be able to authorise any absences from school.

*The Pupil Entitlement Investigating Officer is there to help parents meet their responsibilities and as a last resort may use court action to rectify the problem.*

**Rewards**

The school has set in place behaviour rewards and recognition to promote good attendance and ensure it has a high profile within the school.

* Weekly trophy awarded to class with the best attendance.
* All Children with 96% attendance or above in each half term will be rewarded with an attendance reward from the Headteacher. Awards will be changed over time to keep them fresh
* Any child with 100% attendance in one term will have their name entered into a raffle with a chance to win four tickets to a local tourist attraction.
* Lastly…...the class that achieves the best overall attendance for the whole academic year will be rewarded with a whole class activity. In 2017-2018 this activity is an all-expenses paid trip to MFA Bowl at Chichester Leisure Gate.

**What can parents/carers do to encourage the child to attend School?**

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never advisable to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contacting the class teacher or school immediately and openly discussing the worries is most beneficial. The child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that the reason for the child’s reluctance to attend school is identified, this will enable home and school to work together to tackle the problem. In some cases it may be helpful to discuss the circumstances of the child’s difficulties with another professional.

Making sure that children get enough sleep and get up in plenty of time each morning and ensuring that they leave home in the correct clothes and properly equipped, all show the child, by that interest, that their education is valued. Discussing what they have done in school each day, chatting about the things learnt, the friends that were made and even what they had for lunch all reinforce this.

For many parents/carers, their child attending school may be their first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of them but consistency and a caring supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for both.

**Leavers**

When a child is leaving the school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents/carers are asked to:

* Give the Administration Officer comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and their new address and telephone numbers, their child’s new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to the school in writing

If pupils leave and the school do not have the above information, then the child is considered to be a ‘Child Missing in Education’. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate them, which includes liaising with Children’s Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

**Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & modelling**.

Parents/carers of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child’s participation in a public performance is recorded as C an authorised absence.

***For further advice and guidance on child employment and performance licenses visit West Sussex County Council website at***

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/keeping-children-safe/employing-children/child-performance-licence/>

National Advice - <https://www.gov.uk/child-performance-licence-england-scotland-wales>

**Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, and Showman families**

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for **work purposes only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for traveller children, dual registration is allowed. This means that a school cannot remove a traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code.

**Record preservation**

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back up.

West Sussex County Council Guidance is available on their website:

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/schools-and-colleges/school-attendance-behaviour-and-performance/school-absences/>