

THE KING'S C of E SCHOOL



Student Attendance Policy

This policy relates only to children of compulsory age unless otherwise indicated

Principles

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting student absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent that can result in legal action by the Local Authority.

Many children are sometimes ill or unhappy about attending school. Families can be going through unsettled times that make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties, are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child at an early stage. It is never better to cover up children's absences or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that school attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the staff at school do not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. These are an offence by the parent and include:

- keeping children off school without a good reason
 - truancy before the register has been marked
 - absences which have never been properly explained
 - children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
 - taking holidays during term time that have not been approved by the school in advance
- Parents are expected to contact school staff and to work with them in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may offer parents a formal Parenting Contract or refer the child to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) from the Local Authority.

The EWO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement wherever possible but if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use legal proceedings if required, including Penalty Notices (fines) or prosecution in the Magistrates Court. Alternatively, parents or pupils may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

Procedures

The school has a special responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. These are called “persistent absentees” by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence. Special procedures may be applied to children at risk of falling into this category.

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

- All students must arrive in school by 8:50 am, when the bell rings they go straight to registration in their form. Arrival after 8:50 will result in a late mark.
- If a student arrives between 9:00 am to 9:30 am they must report to the Attendance Officer who will sign them in and record a late mark. All late marks will result in a lunchtime detention. Letters will be sent home if a student receives 2 or more late marks in a week.
- If a student arrives after 9:30 am they must sign in at main reception before going to lessons
- If a student is going to be absent, parents must phone the school before 9:00 am stating clearly the students name, year group, house and form with the reason why they are going to be absent.
- On return to school after an absence – a note needs to be brought in and shown to the Attendance Officer. If a student has had a medical appointment, evidence of this must be brought in to school.
- When a student has to attend a medical appointment in school time (we discourage this and request parents try to make them after school) the appointment confirmation must be signed by HOH before they will be allowed to leave school
- If a student requests a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances a letter from home must be brought in and given to the Student Welfare Officer
- When parents fail to send students to school a continued absence or continued lateness letters will be sent home in the first instance, if this fails to have effect appointments will be made with the Student Welfare Officer who will place parents on a Parenting Contract (this will be reviewed on a 6 weekly basis until the targets in the contract are met)

Penalty Notice

- After parenting Contracts have been put in place and students attendance fails to improve (the school expects all students to have at least 95% attendance. Between 95% and 90% attendance, parenting contracts will be issued. Should attendance fall below 90% the school will involve the EWO, when information will be gathered with the result of possible court action and a fine imposed.

The school will not authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, minding the house, birthdays, day trips etc. Leave may be granted on compassionate grounds in an emergency (e.g. after the death of close relative).

Taking leave without permission is “unauthorised” absence and can be subject to a Penalty Notice fine or other legal proceedings by the Local Authority.

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, staff should be informed in advance if at all possible. A “present” mark may still be awarded if the child attends for as much of the session as they can. It is advised that the student attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole day.

Information about individual school targets, projects, special initiatives and strategies

The school has adopted the following attendance targets and special projects:

All students to achieve a minimum of 95 %

Below 95% to 90% Parents attendance meeting and Parenting Contract issued to be reviewed on 6 weekly basis

90%nd below: EWO involved.

The staff responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Student Welfare Manager – Mrs Badger
Attendance Officer - Mrs Barratt

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Approved by	Resource & Finance Committee
Date	01 December 2015

Appendix 1

A MODEL POLICY ON TERM-TIME LEAVE

Dear Parents

As you know your children should be in school every day. Absence is disruptive for them and for the school. But we recognise that some absences, like illness, may be reasonable and unavoidable and leave can be authorised in certain circumstances. If you wish to request leave for some reason other than your child's illness, you **MUST** discuss it with the school **BEFORE** you take the leave.

Leave should only be requested for the shortest time possible. Trips etc. of more than a few days should normally include times when the school is closed, or only part of the absence may be authorised. Any leave may be refused at certain times of the school year, such as SATs or exams weeks etc.

The Principal has the power to grant leave in 'exceptional' circumstances only. These might include:

- Sudden unexpected incidents, such as when a family member dies or is very ill, or on other compassionate grounds;
- Special 'one-off' family events such as weddings, funerals and other occasional celebrations, (but NOT just because it is the child's birthday);
- Family holidays which have to be taken at certain times because of parents' work shifts and rotas or because their job requires them to work when the school is closed, (e.g. farming, the tourism industry or the emergency services);
- Opportunities to travel overseas for special events which cannot be held in school holidays;
- When your child has an extremely good record of attendance and there has been no other leave taken in the previous two years.

These are only examples. If you think the reason you need leave is 'exceptional', you **MUST** discuss it with the Principal (or other nominated member of staff) in person beforehand. Do not assume that because permission was given for someone else, you will be given permission as well. Every request will be treated on its merits and the full circumstances will not always be made public.

The school can impose reasonable sanctions for unauthorised absences including extra work to catch up or the loss of attendance awards for your child. **In the most serious cases, unauthorised absence can be classed as an offence by the parents and you could be subject to a Penalty fine by the Local Authority.** If you choose not to pay the fine, you may face prosecution if the absence meets the criteria set out in the LA's Code of Conduct. (You can ask to see a copy if you wish).

If you think the Principal's decision not to authorise the absence is unreasonable, you have the right to make representations to the Chair of Governors, but the final decision over any action to be taken lies with the Principal and the LA.