



ATTENDANCE POLICY JULY 2014

“Regular attendance at school is crucial in raising standards of education and in ensuring every child can meet their full potential. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

The Government expects:

Schools and Local Authorities to:

- Reduce absence including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address any patterns of absence
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend early and ensure that all pupils are punctual to their lessons and attend school regularly.

Department for Education – Advice on School Attendance www.education.gov.uk July 2012

The Head Teacher and Governing Body of Kings Cliffe Endowed School, take very seriously their responsibilities for pupils' attendance. Together they have agreed the following Attendance Policy.

What the law says about School Attendance:

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must receive a full-time education. Section 444 (1a) of the Education Act 1966 says: “If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, without reasonable justification, then his/her parent is guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted”.

Children are required to attend school for 190 days (380 sessions) in any single academic year (September-July). Any exceptions to this can only be taken with the full agreement of the Head Teacher.

This policy is informed by DFE. Circular 11/91 “The Education (Pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2006” and “Education Act 1996 section 444, the “School Attendance – Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence,” DEF 1994 – Paragraph 21, page 4 which reminds us that: “Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification (telephone call, written letter) in relation to a particular absence does not, by itself, oblige the school to accept it”.

There is an expectation that over the course of an academic year, a child's attendance will be 96% or more. Absence that falls below 85% is categorised by the Government as persistent absence.



What is an acceptable attendance rate?

The vast majority of our pupils achieve over 95% attendance and this is what we expect from all our pupils as a minimum. OFSTED views 90% as the absolute minimum acceptable attendance rate. Sickness comes usually in a block of time over a continuous period; what we look for are unbroken weeks (i.e. those where the pupil is marked present on all ten sessions); pupils should NOT have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school.

Parents must:

Ensure that their child is able to attend school for the whole academic year by making medical appointments out of school time wherever possible, avoid booking any holidays during term time and avoid encouraging their child to stay at home for unjustifiable reasons.

Definition of a parent: (section 576 Education Act 1996)

- A parent means:
- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child
- All those with day-to-day responsibility for a child or young person

If you feel that your child has an illness which may warrant them remaining at home then you must:

Consider first of all whether you feel that your child would still be able to take part in the majority if not all of the school's activities. In this case, you should still send your child to school.

Should your child become unwell during the day and/or where the school feels that they are no longer able to participate in school activities, the school will contact you to collect your child.

If you feel that your child cannot take part in the school's activities and would be better remaining at home then you must contact the school as soon as possible on the first/each day of absence before 9:30 am. Failure to do so constitutes a breach of this policy.

The person ringing will be asked to identify themselves and clearly give the reason for the absence. This information will be recorded.

If your child has a medical appointment then you must:

Contact the school prior to the appointment to ask for approved arrangements for your child to be collected/returned to school as close to the appointment time as possible.

The school will ask to see a copy of the appointment time/letter. The school will not authorize the absence unless they have seen a copy of the letter/appointment card before the appointment.

If you need to request 'leave' for a specific reason, then you must:

Follow the school guidelines regarding an application for leave e.g holiday. (See 'Leave of Absence').

If you know that your child will be late for school you must:

Contact the school as soon as possible to tell them that your child will arrive late. Make every effort to get your child to school as soon as possible.

If you are having difficulty getting your child to attend school you must:

Notify the school immediately (school office, class teacher, Head Teacher) about your concerns. The school will make every effort to meet with you and attempt to rectify the problem.

The School Must:

- Contact home on day 1 of absence if no message has been received from home;
- Contact home over any unexplained absences.



- Follow up promptly any concerns that parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school;
- Involve the School Support Services to help pupils re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances;
- Regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- Our expectations are outlined in our booklet "School Attendance". This is posted home in September of each academic year.

Registers

Registers are important legal documents and we rely on accurate input in order to follow up any concerns as well as for data analysis.

Marking the register

The head teacher and bursar will be responsible for following up absences and communicating reasons to the Attendance Officer.

- In Maintaining the Registers the school must:
- Keep regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance registers. These are completed at the beginning of each morning session and at the beginning of the afternoon session, using a coding system approved by the DfE and Local Authority.
- For each child, for each session, there will be a code relating to present or absent.
- The absent code will either be authorised or unauthorised. (See 'Use of Attendance Codes')
- Ensure that parents/carers are aware of the times for the beginning of each session, school term dates and other INSET days when a pupil is not expected to attend school
- Notify the parents of any immediate school closure eg due to bad weather
- Respond to requests for attendance data from the Education Investigation Service,
- Local Authority, Department for Education, OFSTED
- Present attendance data regularly to the Governing Body and parents
- Notify parents as early as possible where their child's attendance is a cause for concern
- Notify the Education Investigation Service of individual children whose attendance is a cause for concern

Use of Attendance Codes

A series of codes are used for each child and for each school session. The codes are used by all schools so that reasons for absence can be easily and universally monitored. Each code will mean that the absence has been authorised or unauthorised.

The Head Teacher may decide to use a code that authorises a child's absence due to:

- Leave agreed by the Head Teacher/exceptional circumstances agreed by the Head Teacher
- Day of religious observance – officially set aside by the religious body to which the family belong
- Medical/dental appointment – pupils should be absent only for a reasonable amount of time that is necessary for them to attend the appointment. However, every effort should be made to make these appointments out of school hours.
- Genuine illness or stay in hospital and/or consequent recuperation at home following medical treatment
- Prevention from attending by an unavoidable cause eg exceptionally bad weather coupled with the inability to arrive in school safely eg wheelchair users)
- Attending a family funeral (this must not however exceed an agreed period of absence)
- Exclusion – a temporary or fixed term exclusion will be recorded with code 'E', a



permanent exclusion will be treated as authorised absence until the child is removed from the school register

The following will be coded as 'present'

- Education off-site e.g. visit
- Education off-site at another setting eg exams or dual registered pupils
- Approved sporting activity

Unauthorised codes are used where it is felt that the reason given does not justify the absence.

This may include:

- A shopping trip
- A birthday
- Attending a pop concert/football match
- Bad weather – too wet, too cold
- All session absence for a single short medical appointment
- Lack of usual transport – the parent must demonstrate that every effort has been made to get the child to school safely
- Taking a holiday or period of leave that has not been approved by the Head Teacher
- Parents giving a reason which after investigation is found to be false
- Where no reason for the absence is given, the absence will be unauthorised.

Leave of Absence

The DfE guidelines look at the area of "Special Occasions" and make clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised. Absence resulting from a pupil attending the graduation of an older brother or sister would probably be counted as authorised; a birthday treat to a Theme Park would NOT.

We ask parents to notify the school well in advance (Minimum 4 weeks notice) of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not. Individual cases will need to be judged on their merits and fine judgements will have, on occasions, to be made.

The DfE guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the school that judges whether an absence is authorised or not.

Holidays in term time are no longer permitted by legislation. Any request for 'leave' must be made in writing using the school's "Leave of Absence" forms.

The Head Teacher does have a discretionary power to authorise leave but this is not an automatic right. In making an application for leave, the adult(s) with parental responsibility must make the case that their child will need to be treated differently from the norm.

There will be no exceptions for families who are split eg a request from one parent may be approved but another request from a second parent or family member may be unauthorised. It is the responsibility of both parents with parental responsibility to make their applications for leave; each application will be considered fairly using the criteria below.

Therefore, each request must meet specific 'exceptional circumstances' which would not be expected to be repeated within an academic year, or to occur regularly throughout a child's school life. Reasons such as, 'its cheaper', or 'fits in with work patterns' are not classed as exceptional circumstances.

The Head Teacher will consider each request on an individual basis and will take the following into consideration:

- The child's current and previous year's attendance
- Regularity of requests
- The reason for the request to determine whether it meets the exceptional



circumstances criteria

- Timing of the request ie, a request for leave during exam/SAT week would not be approved. Equally a request for the start of the school year is also unlikely to be approved
- Leave taken without a formal request being made to the Head Teacher will remain unauthorised even if the parent enters a request on returning from the holiday/leave.

Lateness

- Closing of Registers:
- Morning registration closes at 9.30a.m.
- Afternoon Registration closes at 1.30p.m.
- Children who arrive late but before the close of the register will be marked "L" and placed in the late file.
- Children who arrive late and after the close of the register will be marked "U" (unauthorised late) and placed in the late file.
- Parents of children who are persistently late will receive a letter of concern from the school followed by referral to Education Entitlement Services (EES) if deemed necessary.

Absence due to Illness

Children who are genuinely poorly are not expected to attend school and an authorized code will be used. However, where the child's repeated absence due to illness is becoming a concern, the Head Teacher may decide to remove the right to the authorized code, and unauthorise further absences due to illness, particularly if the absences total between 5 and 10 days. The Head Teacher may ask the parent to provide information that supports the parent's view that the child is too unwell to return/attend school eg prescriptions, appointment cards/letters. The Head Teacher will notify the parent of this decision in writing.

In order to avoid this, it is essential that parents inform the school of any health concerns that may be affecting the child's ability to attend school regularly.

School Closures

The academic year is 190 days. Schools also have to have an additional 5 days that they can use for staff training; often called INSET (In Service Training) Days. These days are not part of the 190 days which is every child's free entitlement.

The Head Teacher will make every effort to ensure that the school remains open for 190 days. However, in some circumstances, the school may have to close. The Head Teacher must always consider the health, safety and welfare of every person who uses the school site, pupils, staff, parents, volunteers and visitors. If at any point, to use the school building would be detrimental to a person or persons' health, safety and welfare, then the Head Teacher must close part or all of the school. Such events may be:

- Not enough staff to safely supervise the pupils and ensure the safe running of the school
- Lack of fresh running water and/or toilet facilities
- Lack of appropriate lighting and/or heating
- Damage to the structure of the building eg fire, water or weather damage.
- Instruction to close due to a local emergency incident
- Emergency at the school (See Emergency Plan)
- Severe weather - In the event that severe weather is forecast, or is developing, the
- Head Teacher, will consider either closing the school in advance of the school day, closing the school early, or opening the school later than usual. The action taken will always result from consideration of pupils, parents and staff facing 'significant risk of serious injury' in school or whilst travelling to or from school

Once a decision is made, the Head Teacher will endeavour to inform parents of that decision and the details of any arrangements that have been put in place.



Parents should always assume that the school will remain open during term time unless they hear otherwise.

If the Head Teacher decides to close the school, then the register is closed for the day and coded as an enforced school closure. This does not affect a child's attendance record.

Removal of a Child From the School Role

Parents need to be aware that their child can be removed from the school role/register. This may occur:

- following a permanent exclusion
- if, following a period of agreed absence, the child fails to return to school within 10 school days of the agreed return date
- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being "home-educated"
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school to which they have been registered
- Have a medical condition that prevents them from attending school

Removal from the register is undertaken if the school is not satisfied after enquiries by the Education Investigation Service that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or other avoidable cause.

Education Welfare Service

Our Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits the school when required. The school works very closely with them regarding pupils who are giving cause for concern. The team are available to assist parents where difficulties arise and can be contacted via the school or at the Education Welfare Service (Kettering /Corby & Wellingborough/East Northants): 01536 533933

The Education Welfare Service also initiates legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their responsibility of getting their child to school. Before a case goes to court Parenting Contracts will be drawn up setting targets for attendance levels; there may also be formal interviews which could lead to a penalty notice or Court summons. The prime aim of all action is to get the child attending school on a regular basis.

The Head Teacher and Governing Body of each school have a responsibility to inform the EWS when a child's attendance becomes a matter of concern and to support the EWS in the actions that they may take.

When it is found that parents fail to meet their responsibilities, the EWS has the legal power to take one or more of the following approaches:

- Warning Letter – clarifies the legal responsibility of the parent and the school expectations in relation to what the parent must do next
- Fixed Penalty Notice – may be issued for example if, your child has unauthorized absences, including taking unauthorised holiday in term time, or if the child is continually late for school. The fine is £60.00 paid by each adult with parental responsibility for each child. If you have not paid the fine within 28 days then the fine increases to £120.00 which must be paid within 42 days. There is no option to pay in instalments, the fine cannot be reduced if you are in receipt of benefits and there is no right of appeal. Fines are paid to the Local Authority
- Prosecution – The EIS can prosecute parents if they fail to ensure that their child attends school. You may be fined up to £1000.00. If convicted under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, you may be fined up to £2500.00 and/or 51 weeks imprisonment
- Parenting Order – this may be made by the court where a parent has been found guilty of an offence relating to school attendance, this requires each adult with parental responsibility to co-operate with conditions attached to the order to assist them in managing their child's overall behaviour and attendance.
- Education Supervision Order – where responsibility is shared between the EIS and the parent



- School Attendance Order – Parents are required to register their child at the school named in the order, failure to do so will result in further action being taken

All proceedings are taken in relation to each parent and each child not attending school, for example, two parents with two children not attending will have to answer four offences.

7. Rewards for Good Attendance

To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance the school rewards every child with 100% attendance in any one year with a book.

Attendances and absences are also included in all Annual Reports.

8. Roles and responsibilities:

At Kings Cliffe Endowed School we believe that high attendance levels are achieved as a result of staff working closely together and knowing where their responsibilities lie.

The DfE's policy on the "Practice on the Categorisation of Absence," states that:

"Regular school attendance has always been important. Without it, the best efforts of the best teachers and the best schools will come to nothing. Education provides a means of advancement for all young people. Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them in law. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage. It places children at risk and, in some cases, can result in pupils being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour."

The staff and governors of this school fully endorse this statement and have appointed a named governor with special responsibility, who will work with the head teacher and bursar to oversee this area

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Child Protection/Safeguarding policy.

Signed by Chair of Governors:

Date:

Review: September 2015

