



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Statement of Intent

Kemsley Primary Academy is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Our target for each child at Kemsley Primary Academy is to achieve a minimum of 97% attendance throughout the academic year.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly, half -yearly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality. These include Reggie Bear, Certificates, flash playtimes, reading books and a school trip in July.

We recognise that our pupils are individuals and will work effectively with them and their parents/carers to enable them to achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems preventing good attendance are acted on promptly.

The Governors, Head Teacher and Staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at Kemsley Primary Academy.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attend school. We expect pupils to attend school every day when the school is open and arrive on time. This is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes puts pupils at risk, encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe. Parents should regularly update the school and inform on when their child is returning.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.55 am for registration. All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent, to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

The Role of the School Staff

At Kemsley Primary Academy there is a **whole school** responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

Our Attendance and Wellbeing Officer; Mrs Claire Steadman, has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late.

It is the responsibility of our Attendance Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call.
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.

- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed twice a year of child's attendance figure.

Timeline of School Action for Poor Attendance

- 95 - 100% attendance - class teacher to investigate and notify the Attendance Officer of concerns or the Attendance Officer will monitor pupils 'at risk' of below 95% attendance. The Attendance Officer will contact parent if appropriate.
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents – consider Penalty Notice or Early Help Notification.
- Below 90% - Where the absences have not been authorised consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer and a referral to PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service may be considered.

Punctuality

Punctuality is very important. Arriving late for school is a poor start to the day, potentially causing embarrassment to your child and disruption to the class. At Kemsley Primary Academy the register is taken at 8.55am and 1.00pm. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9.00am and 1.10 pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence. Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. This will be the last resort if all other actions have been unsuccessful. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

Absence (leave) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (with some rare exceptions)

Illness and medical appointments

The school office should be informed during the morning of the first day of a child's absence and then each morning for the duration of the absence. If parents have not contacted school, they will receive a telephone call, asking them why the child is not in school.

Unexplained absences will also be followed up by a letter.

Parents will be reminded of the importance of good attendance and punctuality in newsletters, or more frequently if their child's attendance is causing concern. Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription.

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside of school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of the school day as possible. The school office will require a copy of the appointment letter to authorise the absence.

Religious observance

Kemsley Primary Academy recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will consider authorising absence for these times. Parents will be aware of these dates and should request the absence in the normal way by giving the school a written request in advance.

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Head of School and the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate.

Please see circumstances below:-

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school have failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance - Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017.

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a family member.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a family member.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Leave of Absence/Holiday

From September 2013 the Department for Education have amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school. The school will also take into account the previous three years history.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

