



ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy is reviewed bi-annually

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Introduction

Kingfisher Schools Trust and Stowmarket High School are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance by all. Only by attending school regularly, and punctually, will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

All schools recognise their responsibilities to ensure children are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. Stowmarket High School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting 100% attendance for all its students.

Our policy applies to all students registered at the school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of students who are registered at our school on our school website. This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

The Attendance Policy is designed to achieve the following outcomes:

- To ensure students have full access to an outstanding education which in turn will offer academic success.
- To ensure the wellbeing, developmental and safeguarding needs are met for all students within the school in a fair and consistent manner.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the whole school community - students, parents/carers, tutors, teachers, support staff and School Committee members - work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all children are encouraged and supported to aim for 100% attendance. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from the school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at the school miss just over 3 half-terms of learning or 19 full school days in each year.

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, parent/carers and School Committee Members in our Trust are fully aware of, and clear about the actions necessary to promote excellent attendance. The policy has been drawn up based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations. The school will therefore ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

Aims and Objectives

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Support the safeguarding of all children and families ensuring that students are in school.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which students feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in children a sense of their own responsibility.
- Improve student's achievement, by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Children are expected to attend every day, on time, to maximise the opportunities for learning.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school and the community, by raising the awareness of parents/carers and students of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a student's education.
- Work in partnership with students, parents/carers and staff, so that all students realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement

and dealing with difficulties.

- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers and our attendance officer, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents/carers and students.
- Ensuring that parents/carers understand the responsibility placed on them for making sure their student attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping students with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents/carers, students, staff and school committee members on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting students who have been experiencing any difficulties at home, or at school, which are preventing good attendance, by identifying barriers to the school and developing strategies to overcome these.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Legislation & Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.

These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2007

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Children Missing Education
- Elective Home Education

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a student has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer. For example, unavoidable medical/dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible).
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised. Where the absences are not authorised, we will inform parents/carers of this.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a student is away from school without the permission of the school. (Unauthorised holiday constitutes an unauthorised absence).
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if the school is not satisfied that the reason given is an authorised absence, even with the support of a parent.
- If the absence is unauthorised the Local Authority Attendance service will be notified of the absence and consideration may be given to a Penalty Notice or legal proceedings for non-attendance. A

Penalty Notice is issued to each parent/carer of each student taken out of school and that this carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid within 28 days if the fine is not paid on time, it may result in legal action being taken against parents/carers. Parents/carers have a duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Legal action under Section 444(1) can result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months imprisonment.

- A Penalty Notice will be considered if a student's attendance is deemed as 'not regular'.

Further information on attendance coding can be found in Appendix A.

Procedures

Our schools/academies will undertake the following procedures to support good attendance:

- Record attendance twice daily (and in case of secondary schools in each lesson) and consistently record absence or lateness.
- Communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, School Committee Members, parents/carers and students.
- Follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- Inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- Work with parents/carers and other agencies to improve individual student's attendance and punctuality.
- Refer to Attendance and Safeguarding, any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- Report attendance statistics to the LA and the DfE where requested.

Responsibilities

The Education Act 1996 states that all children should attend school regularly and punctually. Section 444 of the Act says:

"If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered student at school fails to attend regularly at school, his parent is guilty of an offence".

(NB: Where the Education Act refers to "his", it also means "her" or "them".)

The school is clear that "attending school regularly and punctually" be defined as children attending the school every day and being ready to start learning by 8:45am.

All members of our school community have a responsibility for supporting attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Parents/Carers responsibilities:

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents/carers, who will be supported and encouraged by the school.

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Keeping absence from school to a minimum.
- Contacting the attendance office (via phone, email or text) of any absence before the start of the school day for each day their child is absent from school.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter/prescription paperwork or packet.)
- As far as possible, ensure that non-urgent medical or dental appointments are made outside of the school day or avoiding registration periods.
- Providing the school with some form of medical certification as evidence (e.g. prescriptions or doctor's appointment cards) if absence is for more than three consecutive days.
- Making formal requests using the "Leave of Absence" request form for planned absence in term time only if there are exceptional circumstances (as these are unlikely to be authorised) and at

least two weeks in advance – the Department for Education guidance states that “leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday as a norm”.

- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any student's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.
- Making sure all contact details are correct and updated, including contact numbers and home address(es).
- Providing an emergency contact number for more than one person and keeping these details updated.

Students responsibilities:

All students should be aware of the importance of attending school regularly every day and punctually. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their Tutor or Head of Year.

- Aim for 100% attendance.
- Be on time for school and every lesson.
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day.
- Take pride in their attendance and punctuality.

Class Teacher/Tutor responsibilities:

Class teachers and tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office in a timely manner for each session/lesson.

- Welcoming students at the beginning of the day and for each lesson.
- Celebrating high attendance rates – both verbally and through the school rewards system.
- Class teachers/tutors are the child's first point of contact and will monitor daily attendance.
- Take registers accurately and on time.
- Highlighting concerns regarding attendance with parents/carers and/or students.
- Discussing attendance during parent/carer consultations, or at individual parent/carer meetings.
- Raising concerns with the school Attendance Lead where necessary.

Headteacher responsibilities:

The Headteacher will take overall responsibility for attendance in the school and implement the Attendance Policy accordingly.

- Ensure an effective attendance system is in place and is maintained that accurately records attendance and reports absence.
- Nominate a member of the Senior Leadership Team, as appropriate, to undertake delegated responsibility for attendance in the school.
- Assign Attendance Officer duties to a named member of school staff.
- Ensure full training is given to relevant members of staff regarding attendance recording and procedures.
- Consider requests for planned absence and meet with parents/carers to discuss such requests as necessary.
- Make referrals to the Local Authority for the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices as appropriate.
- Monitor the progress of attendance interventions across key groups to ensure all students have the best opportunity for success.
- Ensure attendance statistics, strategies and impacts are reported to the Senior Leadership Team and to the Trust.
- Ensure the School Committee receives monitoring reports on attendance and the implementation and effectiveness of this policy.

Senior Leader in charge of attendance responsibilities:

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting 100% attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school.

- Leading and promoting attendance across the school.
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement and evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes.
- Monitor attendance and, where concerns are identified, develop strategies to address identified issues.
- Inform parents/carers of attendance for their students in line with the school's reporting procedures (using Go4Schools) and building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues.
- Inform School Committees of attendance data through leadership reports, including benchmarking attendance data against local and national data to identify areas for improvement.
- Promote excellent attendance by students and provide opportunities to celebrate good attendance every half term (including 100% attendance and improvements in attendance).
- Monitor the attendance of individual cohorts of children, and plan appropriate interventions at whole group level to address concerns.
- Supported by the Attendance Officer and Heads of Year, the Assistant Headteacher will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared weekly with the Pastoral Leadership Teams, that attendance data is available to all staff, students and parents/carers through Go4Schools, that training is available to all staff taking registers, and that a termly report is prepared for the school committee. The Assistant Headteacher will also ensure accurate attendance returns are made to the Department for Education within the stipulated time frame, as well as submit data to the Local Authority on a half termly basis.

Attendance Officer responsibilities:

The Attendance Officer is in charge of monitoring the school attendance and ensuring that all attendance data is accurately recorded.

- Identify trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Coordinating and making referrals to other agencies as appropriate.
- Liaise with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Keep an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher.
- Inform the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices.
- Inform the Senior Leader in charge of attendance where there are attendance concerns.
- Provide information to support referrals to the Education Welfare Service and liaise with the Education Welfare Officer accordingly.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Follow up absences with immediate requests for explanation via telephone calls or email.
- Ensure attendance issues are raised by teachers at parent/carer consultation evenings where necessary.
- Collate and record registration and attendance information.
- Take and record messages from parents/carers regarding absence.
- Contact parents/carers of absent children where no reason for absence received.
- Record details of students who arrive late or go home.
- Send out standard letters regarding attendance.

School Committee

Attendance data and strategies for attendance will be shared with School Committees during meetings enabling members of the committee to offer challenge and support.

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

Registration & Punctuality

The registers for the morning and afternoon begin at 8.50am (Tutor Time) and 12.30pm (lesson 4) respectively and close at 9.05am and 12.50pm respectively. Any student who arrives after the closing of the register will count as absent. If a student arrives before the register closes but are not present at the start will be counted present but will be marked late and dealt with in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy. It is crucial, for health and safety reasons, that a student arriving late to school signs in at the Attendance/Medical office.

Likewise, students must arrive punctually to lessons. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their lesson, if they are late. If a student arrives after the lesson has started, they will be marked late and dealt with in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy.

If a student does not arrive to lessons, this will be picked up by the Attendance Officer and measures will be taken to locate the student. If a student is found to be truant, they will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy. If a student is not located after reasonable steps are taken, parents/carers will be notified without delay. If the school staff are unable to contact parents/carers and any other specified contacts, we will notify the police.

Where a student is not present at the registration times, they will be marked as an unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended.

Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept securely and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Absences

Parents should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with full details of the reason for their absence. Please avoid using phrases such as "poorly" or "sick".

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents/carers with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

The school will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Where the absence is longer than 3 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Text and/or call the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the school may contact any external professionals working with the family, the Multi-Agency Service Hub or the police.
- Identify whether the absence is to be authorised or unauthorised and use the appropriate attendance code accordingly as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session.
- Text or call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider making a home visit and/or involving an Education Welfare Officer.

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and appropriate evidence is provided. However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Parents/carers must also apply for other types of planned term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

The Headteacher has overall responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school, parents/carers should contact the school by phone, text or email by 8:50am. Where we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent/carer, then the Attendance Officer will message the parent/carer seeking an explanation for absence. If there is still no response, then a telephone call home will be made. If still no response is received, other contacts held for the child will also be contacted. If we have not heard from any contacts, then a home visit may be conducted. Contact may also be made with Children's Services and/or the police in line with safeguarding procedures.

The absence will be unauthorised where the parent/carer fails to provide an explanation on the day of absence.

Illness

When students have an illness that means they will be away from school long term and the school is satisfied with the explanation/medical evidence provided, the school will do all it can to send material home so that they can keep up with their schoolwork.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the Local Authority to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a student has repeated periods of illness, the school may write to parents/carers 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. We may seek written permission from you, for the school to make their own enquiries.

Home Visits

Home visits are important in helping the school to make and/or maintain contact with students of concern and, in doing so, support school attendance and safeguarding.

Each home visit is authorised by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and is undertaken by at least two members of staff. Wherever possible, families are informed of the home visit prior to the arrival of staff, but there are exceptions to this (for example, a visit to confirm that an absent child is at home when families are not responding to telephone calls/text messages or in an emergency safeguarding situation).

Home visits may be undertaken for various reasons, including where:

- Students are refusing to come into school.
- There are ongoing attendance issues/concerns (e.g. a student is absent for 5 or more days).
- Students have a full-time education at home and/or offsite.
- All other means of contact with a family have failed.
- It would be difficult for a family to attend school for a meeting and information needs to be shared in a face-to-face meeting.
- Learning needs to be dropped off or collected for a student in instances where they are completing schoolwork at home e.g. following a suspension or medical issue.

Where attendance is an issue, it is hoped that staff on a home visit will be able to work with and support families in developing strategies to help their child attend school regularly. A home visit is intended to support students and their families, so they do not feel isolated from school, whilst it also gives the opportunity to meet a key staff member in a setting that they are familiar and comfortable with.

Request for Planned Absence from School

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances' (in accordance with guidelines provided by the Local Authority). A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

Should parents/carers be considering a planned absence during term time, a leave of absence request form must be completed by all adults with parental/carer responsibility at least two weeks before the planned absence is booked. Where a planned absence is not authorised, consideration will be given to requesting a penalty notice from the Local Authority for this period of absence if a child's attendance is deemed as 'not regular'.

"The Local Authority strongly encourages parents to take holidays or leave of absence for other reasons during the school holidays, rather than during term time. Schools are closed for 13 weeks a year it should not normally be necessary for children to miss school for these reasons. Any leave of absence requests should be made to the school and leave of absence granted in only the most exceptional circumstances." [School attendance - Suffolk County Council](#)

Fixed penalty notices can be issued for various reasons, which can include:

- an unauthorised holiday
- an unauthorised planned absence
- a succession of unauthorised lates
- a succession of unauthorised absences occurring within an academic year
- a suspended student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure regular attendance and if they fail to do so, may commit an offence under Sections 7 & 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Promoting Good Attendance

All staff (teaching and support) at the school have a key role to play in supporting and promoting 100% attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

School staff are responsible for promoting 100% student attendance by:

- Ensuring that all registers are taken accurately and within the first 10 minutes of registration or a lesson.
- Differentiating appropriately between authorised and unauthorised absence (a letter or message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence - only the school can decide whether the parent's explanation justifies authorising the absence).
- Contacting the parents/carers by telephone or text each day a student is absent from school without being notified in advance and recording the contact.
- Exploring possible interventions where students have attendance issues and where appropriate consulting with the parents/carers.
- Consulting regularly with the Education Welfare Service if a student's attendance continues to give cause for concern and where applicable referring cases for a Fixed Penalty Notice, Prevention Meeting, Education Supervision Order or Fast Track proceedings.
- Analysing attendance figures, monitoring by year group as well as gender, ethnicity, Pupil Premium status and Special Educational Needs status. The school will also carefully monitor those

students who fall into the Persistent Absence category (where attendance falls below 90%) and Severe Absence category (where attendance falls below 50%).

- Acknowledging attendance successes of individual students, classes or tutor groups and issuing regular rewards.
- Following up absences from any lessons in order to deal with truancy, which might occur after morning or afternoon registration.

In closely monitoring the attendance of the students on a cumulative and week-to-week basis, the school undertakes a clear step-by-step approach to declining student attendance:

1. Where a student's attendance puts them at risk of or in persistent absence (overall attendance is below 90%) a school communication (see Appendix B) is sent home to inform the parent/carer of their child's current attendance and outline where additional support is available if required.
2. Where a student's attendance does not improve following step 1, a further school communication (see Appendix C) will be sent to parents/carers advising them that any further absence will become unauthorised unless supported by medical evidence and offering liaison and support if required.
3. Where a student's attendance still does not improve, a referral can be made to the Education Welfare Officer to explore what possible support can be offered to improve the student's attendance.

All students of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. However, in very exceptional circumstances, the school may see there is a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a student's individual needs. A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution, so they will be bound by time limits. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, the school has agreed to a student being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record it as authorised absence.

The school must also have regard to the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The school is required to put in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who go missing from school, particularly on repeat occasions. Where reasonably practicable, for every student, the school will hold an emergency contact number for more than one person. Doing so provides the school with additional options for making contact with a responsible adult when a child is missing school and is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern. Where school staff have concerns about a child, they should use their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual student to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated.

The effectiveness of the Attendance Policy in promoting good attendance will be measured by the overall rates of student attendance and the numbers of students falling into the Persistent Absence category. This data will be shared with the Trust to improve our aspirations for our communities.

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the school policies on:

- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy

Appendix

Appendix A

Section 8 of "Working together to improve school attendance":

[Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)