



## **Attendance and Lateness Policy**

**Approved by Governing Body – September 2024**

### **Introduction:**

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

This policy has been written using the DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance : [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

### **Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

Learning - Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. Attendance percentages are not like examination results, an attendance percentage needs to be in the high nineties before it can be considered good.

- 10 days absence = 95% attendance
- 19 days absence = 90% attendance
- 29 days absence = 85% attendance
- 38 days absence = 80% attendance
- 47 days absence = 75% attendance

**Safeguarding** - Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:

Attendance

Behaviour Management

Health and Safety

Access to the Curriculum

Anti- bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

### **The Law relating to attendance**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he/ she may have Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

## **The Law relating to safeguarding**

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

## **Statement of intent:**

The school aims to work together with Parents/Carers to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend both regularly and punctually. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

## **King Edward Primary School Target:**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The attendance target for this school is 96% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Home - School Newsletter and letters sent home to individual parents/carers and we ask for your full support.

## **Parents/Carers responsibilities:**

- To ensure that children are in school from 8:45am as teaching begins the minute children enter the building.
- To inform the front office on every day of any absence before 9:15am via phone call on 01405 813522, through ParentMail or in-person at the office.
- To work with the school to improve lateness and attendance.
- To avoid medical and dental appointments during the school day (medical evidence must be provided for all children).
- If parents, guardians, or carers are worried about their child's attendance at school they should: talk to their child and teacher; it may be something simple that could need your help in resolving.
- To avoid holidays being taken in term time.

## **School responsibilities:**

- To clearly communicate the attendance procedure and expectations of the school.
- Maintain appropriate attendance data.
- Have appropriate registration processes in place.
- To ensure that registers are taken twice daily: at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.
- To follow up absences and lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- If home visits are undertaken and there is no answer at the home address, a letter will be posted through the door stating that school has tried to visit. Additional services will be contacted if the child is deemed to be vulnerable.
- Inform parents/carers of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences
- To have systematic and consistent daily records which chart absence and lateness.
- To promote and reward good attendance – Appendix 1
- Where there are concerns around attendance, staff will log this onto CPOMs and alert the member of staff responsible for attendance.

- The office will e-mail the Inclusion Team and the Headteacher listing absent children before 9:30am
- Regular meetings between the admin team and Attendance Lead/SLT.
- Attendance meetings/conversations to be logged by the school as appropriate
- First Day Contact Guidelines – Appendix 2

### **Persistent absentees:**

Persistent absentees are defined as children whose attendance is below 90%\* and where unsatisfactory reasons are given for absence. However, the procedures outlined below may apply to children whose attendance is above 90% but where there are concerns about deteriorating attendance or where patterns are emerging, e.g. regular absences on particular days or persistent lateness.

All of the above policy applies to persistent absentees, with the following additions:

- Children's names are highlighted in the Absence File in the front office.
- Any messages received regarding absence of these children are recorded.

If no message is received, either the office staff or Headteacher, Attendance Officer or Family Support Worker must be informed and must attempt to contact the parent at the earliest opportunity. If no contact is made or the message received is unsatisfactory a home visit will be conducted on the first day of absence. The Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) and other agencies may be informed/consulted if deemed necessary.

***\*The school will take in to account any long-term medical conditions when reviewing persistent absentees.***

### **Steps taken to reduce persistent absenteeism:**

1. Letter sent home after 7 days or 14 sessions of absence. Children will be placed on a 'stamp chart' in school to support attendance. Monitored over a two-week period.
2. Letter sent home after 10 days or 20 sessions of absence & will be monitored for four weeks.
3. Letter sent home after 14 days or 28 sessions of absence & a meeting with Attendance Lead/Family Support Worker. Attendance Support Plan put in place – four week action plan.
4. Letter sent home after 19 days or 38 sessions of absence & a meeting with Headteacher. Further Attendance Support Plan put in place – four week action plan.
5. No improvement = Witness Statement will be prepared and submitted to Education Welfare Service for consideration for prosecution.

### **Sickness Absence During Term Time**

- The school office must be notified of your child's absence before 9:15am every day of your child's illness. It is a parent/carer's responsibility to notify the school.
- If the school is not informed of absence before 9:15am, we will call parents/carers. At this point all absences will be marked as unauthorised.
- We reserve the right to request a doctor's/consultant's letter regarding recurring and frequent illness.
- If your child has the same illness more than once in a term, we will request a doctor's/consultant's letter. The absence will be listed as unauthorised until this letter is produced.
- Any child with absence below 90% will have their absence marked as unauthorised unless a doctor/medical note is produced as proof of absence.

- For minor illnesses that require medication, we are able to administer medication for you at school. There is a small form to fill out. This is important so learning is not missed unnecessarily.
- We are legally expected to complete home visits after a period of 3 days of continuous absence. This is regardless of whether or not school have been contacted around these absences.
- Additional home visits will be completed for children that are deemed vulnerable, have attendance concerns & any other time with the approval or request of the Headteacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead.

### Lateness

- Arriving to school on time is an important life skill that all children have to adhere to. Being late means missing large, important chunks of their learning and can result in children not making the progress with their work that they deserve.
- The school day starts at 8:45am. The registers close at 9:00am. After this time, children will be marked at late. (An L code).
- If children arrive after 9:15am, their absence will be unauthorised for the morning session and a U code will be given.
- U codes/unauthorised absences will be included within the prosecution process.

### Requesting leave of absence during term time

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to maximise their educational opportunities. Interruptions in school attendance disrupt continuity of learning and have a negative impact on attainment.

It is the school's responsibility to provide the best education possible. We can only do this if child/ren attend regularly. There is a direct correlation between achievement and attendance.

The Government's guidance states that only under special circumstances may the Headteacher consider giving permission for a child to be absent from school. In line with national and local guidance the school would like to outline clearly when permission will not be granted:

- During transition time as a pupil is settling into the school.
- If the pupil already has unauthorised absences.
- The school will not authorise term-time holidays.

Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices for failure to ensure regular school attendance.

***Parents or carers who take their children on holiday in term time without school's permission or are late returning from an extended holiday, will receive a Penalty Notice fine of £160 per parent per child, if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.***

- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions – *(Working together to improve school attendance. Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities. February 2024)*

### ***Information on Penalty Notices – Appendix 4***

There are 190 school days (380 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. There are 13 weeks of school holidays per year. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period of school holidays.

### **The Role of the Education Welfare Service**

The Education Welfare Service also has a statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.

Section 444 of the Education Act states, "If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parents are guilty of an offence."

The Education Welfare Service, may issue a Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecute parents when children do not attend school regularly.

King Edward Primary School will always pursue enforcement when a child has reached the triggers for penalty fines and/or prosecution.

## **Appendix 1 - Attendance Rewards & Incentives**

### **Daily**

- Child on time (before 9am) – 5 class dojos
- Child in school – 5 class dojos

### **Weekly**

- Promoted in Friday assembly every week
- 99% class attendance - get a letter for 'KEPS' display on the door. If the class spell the word out, they get £20 for the class to spend.
- Attendance Classopoly board in Main Hall
- Non-uniform day on the following Monday for the class with the highest attendance in school

### **Half-Termly**

- 96% and above certificates
- Voucher raffle for 96% and above children's families

### **Yearly**

- 96% and above certificates
- 100% certificates

### **Examples of rewards:**

- Library time
- Extra play
- Extra 50 dojos
- Bench in assembly
- 15 minutes extra on tablets
- Non-uniform day for winning classes
- 96%+ for class over a week 'treats'
- Individual 100% for the week, £5 raffle prize

## **Appendix 2 – First Day Contact Guidelines**

First day contact is a widely used practice in schools and has been shown to improve attendance rates. The correct procedure at King Edward Primary School is as follows:

1. As soon as the registers are returned to the office, the office staff check absentees against messages received via letter, email from teacher or via school absence line.
2. For persistent absentees, see the relevant section above. For other pupils for whom no message has been received, the office staff will attempt to make contact with the parent at the earliest opportunity.
3. When contact is made, the parent will be asked for the reason for absence. In the event that no proper reason is supplied, the parent will be informed that the absence will not be authorised.
4. In the case of minor ailments, the parent will be encouraged to send the child in with an assurance that school will keep a close eye on him/her. (NB – if there has been a spate of certain symptoms in the school or community, such minor illnesses may be treated as a valid reason for absence).
5. Where no contact is made, a message will be left asking the parent to contact the school. Where it is impossible to leave a message, a letter should be sent following this up. In this instance a home visit may be conducted before 10.30am on the first day of absence by the Headteacher, Attendance Officer or Family Support Worker and an appropriate member of staff. An N code will be entered in this situation – if reason for absence is not confirmed within 5 days, the code changes to an O.
6. Reasons for absence are then added to the register.

### **Appendix 3 – Notice to Improve**

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support. A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued in cases where support is not appropriate and an authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any behavioural impact (e.g. because the parent has already received one for a similar offence).

Where a Notice to Improve is used, it should be issued in line with processes set out in the Local Code of Conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

The Notice to Improve is expected to include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and details of the offences.
- The benefits of regular attendance and parents' duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.
- Details of the support provided so far.
- Opportunities for further support and the option to access previously provided support that was not engaged with.
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued or prosecution considered if attendance improvement is not secured within the improvement period.
- A clear timeframe for the improvement period of between 3 and 6 weeks.
- Details of what sufficient improvement within that timeframe will look like.
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

What sufficient improvement looks like can be decided on a case by case basis taking the individual family's circumstances into account. For some families, no further unauthorised absences will be appropriate, for others some absence may be tolerable if considerable improvement is seen. Details of what sufficient improvement for each case should be made clear in the Notice to Improve.

Where it is clear that improvement is not being made, it may be appropriate to issue a penalty notice before the improvement period has ended. For example, a Notice to Improve stated there should be no further unauthorised absences in a 6 week period but the pupil is absent for unauthorised reasons in the first week. The parent should be informed before a penalty notice is issued if it is before the end of the improvement period.



## **Appendix 4 – Penalty Notices**

Penalty notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or, in certain cases, at a place where alternative provision is provided. Penalty notices can be used by all schools (with the exception of independent schools) where the pupil's absence has been recorded with one or more of the unauthorised codes and that absence(s) constitutes an offence. A penalty notice can be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences. They should usually only be issued to the parent or parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

### **National threshold when it is appropriate to issue a penalty notice**

All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. Schools should not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency across the country. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

When a school becomes aware that the threshold has been met, they are expected to make the following considerations to decide whether to issue a penalty notice in each individual case:

- Is support appropriate in this case?
  - If yes, schools are expected to continue with the existing support without a penalty notice or issue a Notice to Improve if that support is not working or is not being engaged with. A penalty notice can be issued if either has not worked.
  - If no, for example a holiday in term time, a penalty notice should be issued subject to the other conditions below.
- Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this particular family or would further support or one of the other legal interventions be more appropriate?
- Is issuing a penalty notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010 such as where a pupil has a disability?
- (For local authorities only) Is it in the public interest to issue a penalty notice in this case given the local authority would be responsible for any resulting prosecution for the original offence in cases of non-payment? If the answer to those questions is yes, then a penalty notice should be issued. If not, another tool or legal intervention should be used to improve attendance.

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. Therefore, from autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Once 3 years has elapsed since the first penalty notice was issued a further penalty notice can be issued, but in most cases it would not be the most effective tool for changing what may have now become an entrenched pattern of behaviour.

For the purpose of the escalation process, previous penalty notices include those not paid (including where prosecution was taken forward and the parent pleaded or was found guilty) but not those which were withdrawn.

In cases where a pupil has moved school or local authority area in the previous 3 years an additional check should be made to try and ascertain whether previous penalty notices have been issued to the parent in respect of the pupil. Where the pupil's previous school was in the same local authority area this check will be simple. If the pupil has moved between local authorities in the previous 3 years and the previous local authority(ies) is known they should be contacted to check whether a penalty notice has been issued to that parent for that pupil in the previous 3 years. These checks can be made by the school and/or local authority depending on the agreed local process. In cases where the previous local authority is not known or the information cannot be, or is not, provided by the previous local authority, it should be assumed that the parent has not previously received a penalty notice and the escalation process started as a new case.