

Student Attendance Policy

Introduction

Good regular attendance is recognised by the staff and governors as essential if effective learning is to take place. An absence of any kind has a detrimental effect on student progress. Students need to attend College regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves students vulnerable to falling behind. Students with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary schools.

The College will fulfil its statutory obligations to publish annual returns to the Government relating to attendance and unauthorised absence. The Government expects schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensure every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and
- To act early to address patterns of absence.

The Government expects parents to:

- Perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school, attend regularly.
- Enable students to be punctual to their lessons.

Form tutors and co-tutors are expected to encourage universal support for the expectation of good attendance, actively seeking explanations for absence from students and their parents. Explanations of absence usually come in the form of written notes or telephone calls. In a small number of cases further action is required and the College uses a number of strategies including parental interviews and the involvement of the Attendance Improvement Officer.

Aims

The College aims to focus on the key practices identified by the DFE in promoting good attendance. These are:-

- Communication of a clear policy on attendance.
- Early contact with parents of absent students.
- Regular analysis of attendance data.
- Schemes to reward attendance.
- Termly attendance certificates.
- Provision of alternative curriculum.
- Collaboration between schools, especially through the Behaviour and Attendance Partnership.
- Effective working with the Attendance Improvement Officer

The College sets a yearly attendance target for improving and maintaining the highest possible level of attendance.

Each year a specific target is set which is shared with Pastoral Progress Leaders, form tutors and students.

Rights and Responsibilities

Everyone within the College community shares responsibility for improving attendance. This includes: students, parents, governors and all staff.

Members of staff at King Edward VII Science and Sport College work with the College's stakeholders to build and sustain a strong ethos that values the regular attendance of all students.

It is the responsibility of the parents to inform the College of any absence. Any student's attendance falling below a recognised standard is highlighted by the Form Tutor/Pastoral Progress Leaders and subsequently referred to the Attendance Improvement Officer. Poor persistent absence must be referred to the Leicestershire County Council Student Services Court Team.

Religious Observance

If the parent's religious body sets a specific day as a religious festival and this falls within normal term time, the College will authorise the absence. Notification should be given by parents in the usual manner. The College has the right to challenge whether it is a day set apart for religious observance and will be guided by national calendars of religious events.

Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence is when a student is away from College, or when a student is late after the register has closed, (9.30am) without permission from an authorised person.

The following reasons for absence will be unauthorised:

- Frequent absences for minor ailments but not supported by medical evidence.
- Looking after the house
- Looking after siblings or sick parents (except in genuine crisis for time limited period)
- Shopping during school hours
- Birthdays
- Day trips
- Holidays (not agreed by the College)

The parent or carer is not able to authorise absence. The Attendance Officer will be consulted where the College is experiencing difficulty in determining whether the reason provided for absence is valid, and particularly where parents appear to be condoning absence that the College considers may be unjustified. If parents fail to provide a reason for absence within two weeks, the absence will be coded as unauthorised.

Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Exceptional circumstances, when a student is unable to attend, are defined as:

- The College site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause.
- The transport provided by the college or a local authority is not available and where the students' home is not within walking distance.
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the student from attending College.
- The student is in custody, detained for a period of less than four months. If the College has evidence from the place of custody that the student is attending educational activities then they can record these sessions as "present at approved educational activity"

Holidays in Term Time

Absence from school disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress and can lead to underachievement and low attainment.

Please bear in mind that students do not have the right to leave of absence for holidays in term-time. From September 2013, permission can only be granted in "exceptional circumstance". All parental requests for term-time holidays should be made in writing, explaining the reason for the request and why the proposed holiday cannot be taken during the school holiday period and should be considered an "exceptional circumstance"

Taking a student on holiday without permission from the Principal would be regarded as unauthorised absence. Parents who do so may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice by the College.

Procedures for Tracking and Monitoring Attendance KS4

Registration KS4 and KS5

- Registration runs from 8.55am – 9.05. Students arriving after 9.05 will be marked as late.
- Registers are 'kept open' until 9.30 am; at which point the emergency "fire registers" will be produced
- Any student arriving after 9.05 am should sign in via the student hatch in the Pastoral and Progress office.
- It is the responsibility of the Form Tutor to take the register. This is then sent electronically via the SIMs system to the admin assistant at the end of registration. A paper register will be taken if no computer is available and will be sent straight to the Pastoral and Progress office following registration.
- Class teachers complete a lesson register each period electronically via the SIMs system. Class registers are monitored via the class teacher/head of faculty.

Lateness KS4

- Lateness is monitored by the administrative support assistant and the Pastoral and Progress leaders.
- Students signing in late are given a 10 minute detention on the same day as the lateness (this does not apply to school buses being late).
- Sanctions are in place for students who are persistently late/fail to turn up for late detentions or who fail to sign in.

Lateness KS5

- Lateness is closely monitored by the post 16 administration support assistant
- Post 16 students signing in late will be required to catch up with missed work on the Wednesday after school 'Study Support' session
- If there is a pattern of poor punctuality then it will be investigated further by the post 16 pastoral and progress team and the students may be required to be put on a 'Progress Contract'.

Informing parents of absences KS4

- Parents are asked to phone school to verify absence. If no phone call is received a text message will be made on the first day of absence via the "Parent Call" system.
- Each week a letter asking for outstanding letters from parents will be issued.
- Every week the Attendance Improvement Officer monitors all students with less than **95%** attendance. A school meeting or home visit may be made by the AIO
- Attendance and matters relating to these issues is reviewed at the weekly meeting of the AIO and Pastoral Progress Leaders. The Senior Leadership Team is kept informed of progress made.

Informing parents of absences KS5

- Post 16 attendance is reviewed weekly and the Senior Leadership Team is kept informed of progress made
- If a Post 16 student is persistently absent, the tutor will ask for an explanation. If the reason cannot be verified or is not appropriate then the Post 16 pastoral and progress team will contact parents and either discuss the issue over the telephone or arrange for a meeting with the Assistant Principal (post 16).

Home Study Agreement Year 13 Students

- Students who have returned their signed letter for the agreed home study period are permitted to sign out at the pastoral and progress office.
- Post 16 students are permitted to sign out for lunch on the condition that they sign back in.

Returning to school

If a student is absent from college for a longer period of time, a reintegration programme (Pastoral Support Plan) is set up with the Pastoral and Progress Leaders, AIO and Vice Principal (Pastoral). This is monitored to ensure a failsafe strategy for returning to college.

Strategies for promoting good attendance and punctuality

Positive Action and Rewards System

In order to encourage good attendance a number of positive measures are used:

1. At the start of the school year the college's attitude to good attendance and the main strands of the policy are explained to new and continuing students by Senior Leadership, Pastoral Progress Leaders and Form Tutors through assemblies and tutorials.
2. Weekly figures are compiled and form tutors discuss these at Year Team meetings.
3. Tutor group total % attendance is published each week.
4. Tutor Groups with the highest attendance in each year group over a term are presented with a Tutor Group prize.
5. Each term, class teachers award students "Go4Schools" points for good attendance to lessons. Certificates are awarded to students with the most points at the end of each term.

Other acknowledgements over longer periods of time:

- a Tutor Group Awards: Each term the best attending Tutor Group will receive an award. At the end of the year the best attending Tutor Group will receive an award.
- b Students' Awards: Students with 100% attendance for the term will receive a certificate and be put in a prize draw.

Strategies for dealing with poor attendance

There will always remain a need to respond more firmly in some cases of poor attendance

- Poor attenders will initially be seen by the Form Tutors. Form Tutors refer to the Pastoral Progress Leaders who will make contact with parents to express the college's concern and seek explanations for poor attendance. Parents may be asked to provide a medical certificate from the GP when accounting for any future absences.
- Where this does not lead to improvement they will be referred to the Attendance Improvement Officer.
- A range of strategies may be adopted including daily report forms and parental interviews.
- Students who are persistent absentees should be helped by class teachers/social inclusion staff to catch up on the essential work they have missed, and settle back in to school life. Care needs to be taken to minimise the negative effects of this catching up process on other students. The Attendance Improvement Officer will be informed where these individuals have made sound efforts to improve attendance.
- The Attendance Improvement Officer will follow the Local Authority procedures for persistent absentees – see also “children missing education”
- The College has an extensive range of strategies it can employ to tackle poor attendance (see the A-Z of Attendance Strategies).

Strategies for dealing with poor attendance KS5

There will always remain a need to respond more firmly in some cases of poor attendance.

- Poor attenders will initially be seen by their Form Tutor. Form Tutors refer to the Assistant Principal (Post 16) who will make contact with parents to express the college's concern and seek explanations for poor attendance. Parents may be asked to provide a medical certificate from the GP when accounting for any future absences.
- A post 16 student may be put onto a 'Progress Contract' whereby targets to improve attendance are jointly set with the Assistant Principal and a weekly meeting takes place to review if the targets have been met.
- Where this does not lead to improved attendance the student's post 16 place at King Edward VII may have to be discussed.
- Post 16 students will be required to catch up on any work missed due to poor attendance. They may be required to attend the 'Study Support' session Wednesday after school to aid with this.

Monitor, Review and Feedback

- Attendance is monitored weekly by the Pastoral and Progress Leaders / Attendance Improvement Officer. Members of the SLT are given data and statistics; these are discussed at pastoral meetings.
- The Pastoral and Progress Leaders share the relevant information with form tutors.

- Pastoral and Progress Leaders meet weekly with the Attendance Improvement Officer to monitor and review attendance figures.
- Governors are kept informed of attendance figures and information is regularly shared at governors meetings.
- Attendance data is analysed regularly and feedback is given to students, parents, governors and school staff.

Safeguarding

Staff will at all times have due regard for child protection and safeguarding procedures. Any request for/ or occurrence of prolonged absence, particularly for overseas visits, will be thoroughly investigated and any concerns passed on to the relevant authorities. The College will not authorise prolonged periods of absence due to the detrimental effect on the education of the child.

The College supports the Leicestershire County Council policies on forced marriage and the sexual exploitation of children, including the risk of possible female genital mutilation (FGM). Any suspicion regarding student attendance which may be related to these areas will be followed up in the most vigorous manner permissible within the law.

Parents' responsibilities

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving efficient full-time education (section 7 of the Education Act 1996). Parents should notify the College in writing if they intend to remove their child from education or to move schools (both from within and outside of the Local Authority Area).

Children missing in education

Students remain on the College roll until confirmation is received that the student has been accepted at their new school.

All schools must inform the local authority of any student who is going to be deleted from the school roll where they:

- Have been taken out of school and being educated outside the school system. Any intention to educate a child at home must be notified in writing to the College. The parents should then follow the correct LA procedure before the child can be removed from the school roll. This can be found at: homeeducation@leics.gov.uk.
- Have a medical condition certified by their GP/Educational Psychologist that the student is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school. (www.gov.uk/illness-child-education)
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order
- Have been permanently excluded (www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions)
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence may be agreed upon following consultation with: MultiAgencyTravellersUnit@leics.gov.uk. (A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.)
- Any child “missing in education” will be referred to the CME team at County Hall (cme@leics.gov.uk) via the Attendance Improvement Officer following completion of the child missing education check list
- Persistent absence – The College will inform the local authority of any student who fails to attend college regularly, or who has been absent without the College’s

permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. The AIO at the College will liaise with the Local Authority and follow the LA procedures; this may include obtaining a court order.

Frequently Asked Questions (DfE guidance – October 2014)

Can a school place a pupil on a part-time timetable?

As a rule, no. All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances there may be a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision.

Are pupils entitled to study leave?

No. Study leave should not be granted by default once tuition of the exam syllabus is complete and study leave should only ever be granted to pupils in year 11. If schools do decide to grant study leave, provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

All pupils are different and have different requirements and preferences when preparing for examinations. Some schools do seek alternatives to study leave as they recognised that some pupils do not have the skills, or are not inclined, to make the best use of unsupervised and unstructured revision time. However, many schools also recognise that study leave is a chance for pupils to develop the independent study which will help them when they move to Post-16 provision, where a self-study approach is commonly used.

How should schools record the attendance of pupils on study leave?

Year 11 pupils granted study leave should be marked on the attendance register as authorised absence (code S). No other attendance code is suitable for the purpose of study leave. Year 11 pupils who are 16 years old are of compulsory school age (up to the last Friday in June) and must be marked on the attendance register accordingly.

Can a school use a designated school day as an academic review day for parents?

No. Academic review day should not be used as part of the school day. Schools should endeavour to hold these reviews out of school hours. (Our Year 10 review days only use 10 minutes of a child's day).

Do schools need to consult parents if making changes to the school day?

No. Although parents must be informed of the changes, there is no legal requirement to consult parents or to give an explanation as to why the decision has been made. Of course, schools can consult parents if they wish to, and where they have raised the expectation that they will consult, should honour that commitment.

Can a parent take their child on holiday during term time?

Head teachers should only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If a head teacher grants a leave request, it will be for the head teacher to determine the length

of time that the child can be away from school. Leave, is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purpose of a family holiday as a norm.

Does the change to the regulation on leave of absence affect child performers?

The amendments made to regulation 7 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 on leave of absence do not affect the section that allows the parent of a child performer to seek leave of absence from school to take part in a performance. The amendments affect section 3 and 4 of regulation 7, which relate to leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday.

Section 2 of Regulation 7 (which has not been amended) still enables a head teacher to grant leave of absence for a pupil to undertake employment during school hours for the purpose of taking part in a performance within the meaning of section 37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963.

Legislation sets out that a local authority licence must be obtained before a child can take place in a performance. Where the license specifies the dates that a child is to be away from school to perform, then the head teacher should authorise those days. However, where the terms of the license do not specify dates it is at the discretion of the head teacher to authorise leave of absence. Head teachers should be sympathetic to requests that are supported by a licence, as long as the school remains satisfied that this will not have a negative effect on a child's education.