

ATTENDANCE POLICY 2019



KING HAROLD
ACADEMY

Challenge • Support • Inspire



Aim

King Harold Academy recognises that positive behaviour and regular attendance 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 in order to make good progress in their learning. Our aim is for **EVERY** child to have **100%** attendance, this high expectation can **ONLY** be achieved with support from parents. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour. It is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'

Authorised Absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.



Only the Head of School can authorise absence and only in exceptional circumstances. The Head of School is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation or act upon it. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, however is not exhaustive:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- 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 taken during term time without leave, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher- may result in school applying to the local authority to issue a penalty notice or if you have previously been issued a Penalty Notice, the school may request a direct prosecution by the local authority.
- Issues in school that have not been reported to a member of staff for investigation
- Issues with students that have happened outside of school
- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes however is recorded as an absence for the session.

School Attendance and the Law

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.

Legal sanctions may include issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice for £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days or referring the matter to the Magistrates Court whereby each parent may receive a fine up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If you are found guilty in court you will receive a criminal conviction.

There is no longer any entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional



circumstances" and they no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

Each application for leave will be considered on its own merit however it is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing on the prescribed form provided by the school. Parents will receive a written response to applications for leave. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty notice may be requested by this school.

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Essex County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from April 2019 (see Annex A).

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education and we need a parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly. If a child is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark we will inform the parent/carer. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent from school the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before *9.20 am* by telephone or email
- Contact the school on **every** further day of absence, again before *9.20am*
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and provide a written explanation for the absence. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence and this will be shown on your child's report.
- Provide any medical evidence if requested to support the absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you however it is your responsibility to contact us. A home visit may be completed if we do not hear from you.
- Write to you if your child's attendance is below *95%*
- Invite you in to school for a meeting to discuss the situation if absences persist.
- Refer to partner agencies for support if appropriate and if there are any safeguarding concerns, a referral will be made to Essex Social Care.

If absence persists:

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. However, if attendance does not improve, a Legal Action Warning Letter may be issued to parents stating the legal consequences of continued absence. Subsequently, a referral may be made to the Local Authority and legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice (see Annex A for the Essex Code of Conduct), prosecution in the Magistrates Court or the application of an



Education Supervision Order, designed to strengthen parental responsibilities and ensure improved attendance.

Lateness

The school day starts at **8.25 am** when children are expected to be in school. Registers are taken at **8.35 am** and your child will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in by that time. Children arriving after **8.35 am** are required to come in to school via the school office. Students who are signed in at this time **WILL BE ISSUED WITH A 30 MINUTE DETENTION FOR THAT EVENING**. We expect that students arrive on time and to get to their lessons promptly. Failure to attend this detention will

At **9.20am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site 'U', but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of being issued with a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the School Welfare Officer and/or Child and Family Support Worker, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving King Harold Academy **other than** at the end of year 11 parents/carers are required to inform the school via email or letter. This would need to contain the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all of our pupils. School has a statutory duty to inform the Local Authority of any pupils joining the school or leaving the school (other than at the end of Year 11).

It is crucial that parents keep the school updated with current addresses and contact details for key family members in case of emergency.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance.

Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school, on time, every day.

All school staff and the Governing Body are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Parents should ensure their child has 100% attendance in line with King Harold Academics high expectations. If your child is in school, they are learning and they are safe.



A Parents Guide

1. When does my child need to be in School?

Your child should be in school at 8.25am in time for registration which will be called promptly at 8.35am.

2. What happens if my child is late?

Registration finishes at 8.50am in the morning.

If your child arrives after 8.35am she/he will be marked late and will receive a 30 minute detention to be served that evening.

If your child arrives after 9.00am she/he will be marked as late, continued lateness will be followed up by the Attendance Liaison Officer and parents/carers will be contacted about our concerns. They will also receive a 1 hour detention to be served that evening.

You are expected to give a written explanation for the lateness.

3. Does the School need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

We expect parents/carers to telephone the school on the morning of the first day of absence and every day their child is off following this. If you do not phone us, we will text you. However, we need a written explanation on your child's return to school. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence and this will be shown on your child's report.

4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Emergency dental/medical appointments (please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays. Appointments during school time should be for no longer than 1-2 hours)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. Where time has been taken off school for medical reasons / illness, the school can record these as authorised absences with evidence. This evidence can be in the form of a doctor's letter, appointment cards, medical prescription, to name a few examples. Parents/carers are encouraged to make appointments out of school hours and, where this is not possible, to ensure that pupils are only out of school for the minimum amount of time.

5. What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep, and gets up in plenty of time each morning.

Ensure that they leave home in the correct uniform and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value their education.

6. My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Contact your child's form tutor immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons - difficulties with work, friendship problems and family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with the Attendance Liaison Officer.



7. Will the School contact me if my child is absent?

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward. The school operates a first day response to absence: we will text you if we have not heard from you in the first instance. If we are unable to make contact with parents/carers by telephone; we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home and a home visit may be made in the interests of safeguarding. A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parent/carers by the 10th day of absence, at which point your child will be considered Missing from Education.

8. What if my child is Truantiing?

You will be informed by the Attendance Liaison Officer and support will be put in place to try and resolve any issues/concerns your child may be experiencing. However, if there are further unauthorised absences you may be issued a penalty notice by the Essex Local Authority. The amount is £60 per child per parent if paid within 21 days. This amount will rise to £120 per child per parent if not paid within the specified time period.

9. What if I take my child out of school without permission for an extended period?

All requests for leave should be made in writing and include an expected date of return. If we are unable to secure a return date, your child may be taken off roll after 20 school days and referred to the Essex Local Authority as Missing from Education. Any period of leave not authorised by the Headteacher may result in a referral to the Local Authority for the issue of a Penalty Notice.

This policy has drawn on:

- Section 444 of the Education Act 1996
- Essex code of conduct (2019) penalty notices for parents of truants and parents of pupils excluded from school anti-social behaviour act 2003 section 23

Reviewed By: Mr C Freeborn

Checked by: Mrs J Colley

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