

Knebworth

Primary & Nursery School



Attendance Policy (Pupils)

Date reviewed:

September 2017

Date for review:

September 2019

Responsibility:

Full Governing Body

Classification:

Public

Introduction

Knebworth Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education 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.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or later 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 an exceptional reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Principles aims and objectives

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities

Policy implementation

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils, Governors 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 their annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below 95%.
- Celebrate good attendance

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Whether to authorise or not authorise an absence lies solely with the school.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Such absences must be followed up in writing.

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 Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings which may result in a fine.

This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time

Whilst any child may be absent because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carer and the child. If a parent/carer thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse or the Attendance Improvement Officer. Please contact your child's class teacher to discuss any issues further.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

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

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly and we support families with the intention of avoiding persistent absenteeism wherever possible. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully we also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are supported; this support may include: allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Attendance Improvement Officer or Education Welfare Officer. We may also use circle time, individual targets and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent the parent/carer must adhere to the following procedures:

Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 9.20am. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call.

Alternatively, parents may call into school and report to reception or report the absence on ParentMail.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you by mid-day
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders, Deputy Head if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the AIO if attendance remains below 90% unless there are exceptional circumstances

The Attendance Improvement Officer

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. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance Improvement Officer from the Local Authority.

They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the AIO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons which can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts promptly at 9.00am. Doors open at 8.50am for a staggered entry to school. Doors/gates close promptly at 9.00am.

Registers are marked by 9.10am and your child will receive a late mark (L) if they are not in by that time.

A child arriving between 9.00 and 9.10am will be marked as late before the register closes.

At 9.10am 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 a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Deputy Head/ Head Teacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class punctuality.

Special or Exceptional circumstances in Term Time

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday or have time off during term time.

No term-time leave will be authorised except for very exceptional circumstances.

The decision to authorise a term-time absence lies solely with the school and any decision made is final.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a legal duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

The Governing Body reviews this policy every two years. The Governors may, however, review the policy earlier than this if the government introduces new regulations, or if the Governing Body receives recommendations on how the policy might be improved.