

# Knebworth

Primary & Nursery School



## Attendance Policy (Pupils)

## Principles aims and objectives

- To promote children's welfare and safeguarding as a priority.
- To emphasise the importance of maximum attendance for all children.
- To make explicit to all relevant parties Knebworth's expectations of attendance levels.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance.
- Communicate to all relevant parties the legal position with respect to attendance

## Introduction

At Knebworth school we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our children. Regular attendance at school is vital. It is a legal requirement that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school.

Irregular attendance and or lateness leads to missed learning and as such the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory and children are at risk of not fulfilling their true potential. Additionally, it 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.

## What is an acceptable attendance rate?

National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance rates and high examination performance. It is a key indicator of an effective school and, as such, will be scrutinised by OFSTED. The vast majority of our children achieve over 95% attendance and this is what we expect from all of our children regardless of age as a minimum.

One indicator of concerning attendance is broken weeks. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school. To ensure our records are accurate, we may ask for medical evidence.

## Authorised Absences

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school 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.

The School cannot legally authorise any leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Department for Education (DfE) has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- (i) a child is ill or receiving medical attention (Routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible)
- (ii) days of religious observance, notified in advance
- (iii) absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness)

There are other absences, such as approved sporting activities that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school; professional discretion will be used in these cases to determine whether the absence can be authorised. We may ask for evidence at any time to support the reasons provided for any absences.

## Unauthorised Absences

These are absences where:

- no letter or acceptable explanation/evidence is provided by parent(s)/carers;
- the reason for the absence is not deemed by the school to fall into one of the categories of **authorised** absence above.

**Table 1: This table shows the impact of learning hours lost from regular absence and details some of the interventions and strategies in place.**

Descriptor	Percentage attendance	Actual attendance (days)	Whole days absent	Learning hours lost	
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	Preventative
	99%	188	2	10	
<b>Good</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	
Identify students of concern and send letter 1	97%	184	6	30	
	96%	182.5	7.5	37.5	
<b>Becoming Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>180.5</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>47.5</b>	
Identify students of concern and send letter 2. Meet with parents to discuss concerns and identify support. A referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO).	94%	177	13	65	
Identify students of concern and send letter 3. Continue to engage with parents to discuss concerns and identify support. As soon as 15 sessions of unauthorised absence is reached, 'Fixed Penalty Notice' paperwork will be issued.	92%	175	15	75	
<b>Cause for Concern</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>95</b>	Legal
After identifying students of concern, parents will be invited to an action planning meeting. Attendance will be closely monitored over the next 6 weeks. A referral will be made to the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO).	Below 90%	169	21	105	
During the 6 weeks monitoring period and at any time following, attendance will meet set target. If attendance does not meet target and absence is unauthorised, legal intervention may be taken.	89% and below	167 and below	23	115+	

## Holidays

We strongly discourage holidays being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child. In line with other schools, we ask parents who feel it is absolutely unavoidable that they take their annual holiday (or any other proposed special occasions) during term time to notify the school, in writing, **at least four weeks in advance of the proposed date**, explaining the circumstances. It would be very rare to authorise a holiday during term time. The DfE guidelines clearly state that, in the final analysis, it is the school that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. These amendments make it clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is for the Head Teacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and for them to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

## Concerning Absence

Attendance that falls below 98% can become concerning to a school if there are unauthorised, unexplained or questionable absences. Attendance will be regularly reviewed and the necessary actions taken as per our attendance flow chart. If your child has concerning attendance, we will write to you and inform you. At this point, we may ask you to provide evidence for any further absences and will not authorise these absences without appropriate evidence. It is for the school to determine whether to authorise the absence based on the evidence provided. Sometimes children can be reluctant to attend school. 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. Your child's class teacher should be the first contact under these circumstances.

## Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason (DfE, 2018). 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.

At Knebworth, pupil attendance, all absence and the reasons given are monitored thoroughly. 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.

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, action planning and individual targets and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

## Missing in Education

All schools have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. We will make reasonable enquiries to establish a child's whereabouts but then have a duty to inform the local authority of any pupils who are regularly absent from school,

have irregular attendance, or have 10 or more consecutive school days absence without the school's permission.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil may be removed from the admission register. (DfE, 2016)

## Absence Procedures

### Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents to:

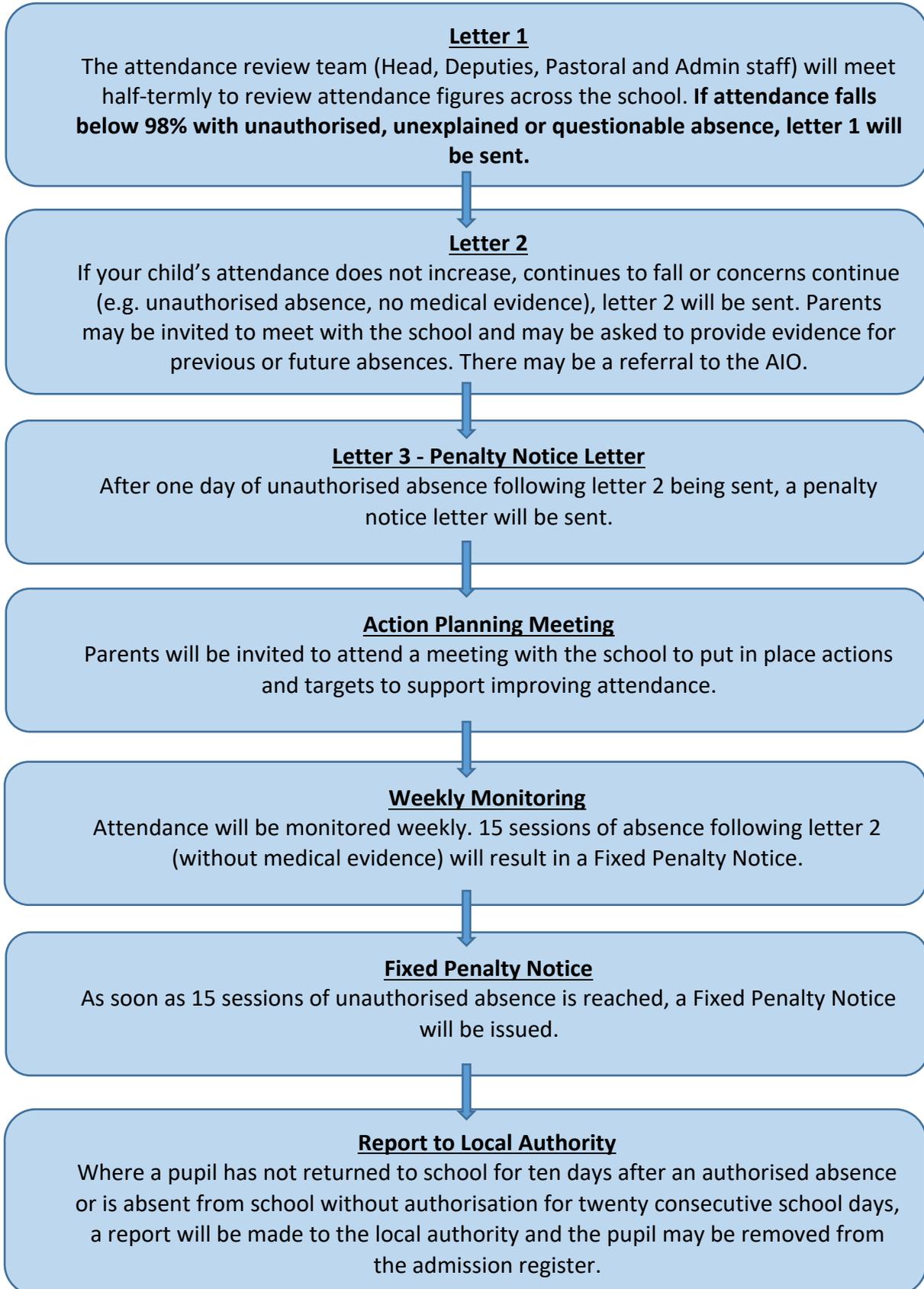
- do all they can to ensure their child arrives **on time** for morning and afternoon school sessions;
  - Children can arrive from 8:50am and morning registration is at 9:00am.
  - Afternoon registration is at 12:45pm for EYFS & KS1 and 1:15pm for KS2.
- if their child is ill, notify the school **on the first day by phoning the school office** with an estimation of the likely length of absence. If you leave a message on the answerphone, then a member of the office team will phone you back.
- get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude towards school.

### In return the school will:

- contact home on day 1 of absence if no contact has been made or if an answerphone message has been received.
- contact home over any unexplained absences.
- follow up promptly any concerns parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school.
- involve the inclusion leader to help pupils re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances.
- regularly remind children of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- reward excellent or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.
- give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters.
- report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with their annual school report.
- review attendance records regularly and act on findings, as detailed in the attendance flowchart.
- contact home should their child's attendance become concerning to the school

## Flow Chart

What happens at Knebworth if your child's attendance falls below the expected level?



## Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. 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.

- 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. Children arriving after this time will be marked as late (L).
- Afternoon registration is at 12:45 for EYFS & KS1 and 1:15pm for KS2.
- Children who arrive after 9:10am will be recorded as unauthorised (U) unless a valid reason is provided such as a medical or dental appointment with supporting evidence.
- A student should be marked as **late** when the teacher has completed the whole register and a pupil arrives after the register has been “sent” (electronically).
- We are consistent in our approach to latecomers so teacher will record lates and the number of minutes late after 9:00 then re-send registers.
- Lates are counted as present when the data is collected; however, parents have been successfully prosecuted for failing to get their child to school consistently on time. Therefore we will take a robust response to those who are regularly arriving late.
- Lates recorded as unauthorised (U) will be counted as an unauthorised absence and all systems for monitoring absence/improving attendance will apply in these cases. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

## The Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)

We work in partnership with the AIO to improve attendance for individual pupils and the whole school. The headteacher meets the AIO regularly, on an agreed schedule. When attendance does not improve sufficiently, and after discussion with the AIO, a formal referral may be made to Children, Schools, and Families.

## Summary

We feel attendance levels are an indicator of how effective and caring a school is. Failure to attend can be an indication that all is not well at home so that there is a welfare aspect to attendance as well. Equally, it is clear that regular, consistent attendance is an essential pre-requisite for effective learning. Our community is aspirational: we are ambitious for all our children and give the same level of attention to attendance as to other matters concerning their well being and achievement in school. We look forward to your cooperation.

## Evaluation of the policy

This policy is reviewed regularly, and evaluated against the aims stated in the policy. Further information: [www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolattendance](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolattendance)