

Kitchener Primary School

Attendance Policy



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Aims and Expectations

At Kitchener Primary School we believe that regular school attendance is an important part of giving children the best possible start in life.

The School takes a whole school approach to improving attendance, understanding that good attendance, effective learning and teaching, having a highly engaging pupil influenced curriculum offer and positive wellbeing are linked.

The school believes in having a kind, proactive and positive approach to improving attendance, working in collaboration with families and professionals to secure the best quality education for all children.

Why is it important for children not to miss school?

The school, parents and Governing Body want the best for their children and for them to get on well in life. Having a good education is important to ensure that they have the best opportunities in their adult life. All children only get one chance at school, and a child's future may be affected by not attending school.

If children do not attend school regularly they may:

- Struggle to keep up with school work. In a busy school day it is difficult for schools to find the extra time to help a child catch up.
- Miss out on the social side of school life. Poor attendance can affect children's ability to make and keep friendships; a vital part of growing up.

Setting good attendance patterns from an early age, from nursery through primary school, will also help your child later on in their life. Children who have a poor school attendance record may have less chance of securing a job when they are adults.

Why is punctuality (being on time) so important?

Being on time is vital. Arriving late at school can be very disruptive for your child, their teacher and the other children in the class. Children who arrive late also feel embarrassed which may impact the child on how they feel for the day. It is important that children understand the importance of time keeping and being organised as life skills.

There may be times when parents are finding it difficult to ensure that their child attends school regularly. If this is the case, it is important to talk to the school as soon as possible.

Benefits of good attendance:

- Good habits

It builds in young children the idea that getting up and going to school is simply what you do. Children who attend every day develop a feel for the rhythm of the week and gain a sense of security from regular routines.

Underachievement is often linked to lower attendance. For some older children this is linked to a steadily deteriorating trend in attendance which is traceable right back to Reception. Establishing good habits early is the key to future success.

- Secure relationships

Young children find it easier to build and sustain a range of social relationships when they regularly attend school.

- Self – esteem

Children who rarely miss sessions at nursery/ school and arrive on time are more likely to feel good about themselves. Children who regularly miss sessions, or are generally late, can frequently experience a sense of having to try a little bit harder just to understand what is going on and what other children are talking about or doing.

- Learning and development

Children's learning develops quickly in the primary years. For example, once phonics begins in Reception children are learning a new phoneme every day. This means any time lost creates gaps in learning.

Improving school attendance is a priority for the school and recognises it is everyone's responsibility.

The implementation of the attendance policy, including strategies to improve attendance, is monitored by the Community Coach with support from the SLT.

Completing the Register

The register is completed twice daily: at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. The school recognises that the register is highly important document that is legally requires to be completed accurately.

The school uses the SIMS electronic system of registration which is available on every computer in every classroom. Teachers are responsible for inputting the correct code on the system and closing it down when not in use to prevent any breaches of confidentiality.

Guidelines are kept in a file on the school server to inform teachers and trained teaching assistants as to the correct procedure for marking registers. If a teacher has reason to doubt that an explanation offered by a parent is not genuine, the absence should be treated as unauthorised.

The school administrator is responsible for processing codes for any pupil who attend school after the register has closed or parents who ring with an explanation for their child's absence.

Pupils are expected to attend school for the full academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence. The following codes are used to record a child's attendance:

CODE	DESCRIPTION	STATISTICAL CATEGORY
/ \	Present at registration	present
L	Late but arrived before register closed	present
M	Medical or dental appointment	authorised
I	Illness that is reported	authorised
R	Religious observance	authorised
C	Other authorised circumstances not covered	authorised
E	Excluded	authorised
G	Family holiday not agreed	unauthorised
U	Late and arrived after register closed (after 9.30)	unauthorised
N	No reason for the absence provided yet	unauthorised
O	Other unauthorised not covered by codes No messages left with the school	unauthorised
D	Dual registration (attending other establishment)	Approved educational activity
B	Educated off site	Approved educational activity
Y	Partial and forced closure	Not required to attend
*	Pupil not on roll yet	Not required to attend
#	School closed to all pupils	Not required to attend
X	No attendance required (Nursery)	Not required to attend

These codes can only be entered by the SLT, COMMUNITY COACH or school administrators.

Holidays

In line with Welsh Government and school policy, all holidays taken in term time are unauthorised and the G code is applied. The school strongly encourages all parents to arrange family holidays during the school holidays wherever possible to avoid long periods of absence which can have a negative impact on children's attainment and social development. See appendix

In keeping with Cardiff County Council Schools, the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will follow the procedure below.

- Parents who ask to take their child on holiday during term time are advised not to and reminded of the negative impact on their child's learning.
- If a parent decides they are still going to take their child on holiday regardless of what the school has advised they are told that the G code will be applied and that a Fixed Penalty Notice fine may be issued.
- Parents must sign the Unauthorised Holiday Disclosure form stating the start and return date and including contact telephone details. This is a safeguarding procedure so the school knows where the family will be.
- Parents are warned that the Schools Attendance Officer will contact them about taking the holiday and reinforce the school's attendance policy.
- After a maximum of **4 weeks/20 school days** if the pupil has not returned we will take the pupil off roll. The code G will be used to indicate this and the administrator will mark in all unauthorised family holidays.

- If a pupil is taken off roll they will need to reapply for a school place by contacting admissions on the Cardiff County Website. A place may not be available at Kitchener Primary School. Parents will be made aware of this.
- If parents have problems returning before the agreed date they must inform the school directly or via other family members or friends living locally.

Punctuality

The school regularly reminds parents of their obligation to ensure their children attend school punctually. The school day begins at 8.55 am and the registration period ends at 9.30.

Lateness codes are used to identify and track patterns of poor punctuality. This results in parents being informed and reminded of their legal obligation to ensure their child attends on time. Every morning our community coach will keep a record of lateness and identify pupils who are repeatedly coming to school after 8.55am. In circumstances where lateness becomes a serious concern the school will make a referral to the Education Welfare Service.

A FPN can be issued for persistent 10 or over unauthorised marks. This can be a combination of late marks, unauthorised marks and absences.

Monitoring Attendance

The Community Coach, with support from the SLT team, is responsible for monitoring school attendance. Individual attendance is monitored every 2 weeks with the SAO using the School Attendance Link Record in order to ascertain those pupils with irregular patterns of attendance as well as those pupils whose attendance has improved. The Community Coach will compare attendance records at the end of every 4 weeks monitoring for any pupil whose attendance is **under 95%** including vulnerable groups and determine an appropriate action. This could be a First Letter, Second Letter, Improved Letter, phone call, informal meeting, formal planned meeting with the SAO and parents/guardians. Parents of pupils with poor attendance are informed of their child's attendance record and reminded of their responsibility to ensure their child attends school every day.

If subsequent monitoring reveals that a child's attendance has continued to deteriorate despite previous actions the Schools Attendance Officer is informed. The school maintains strong links with the SAO to monitor attendance and punctuality meeting once a fortnight. The SAO makes regular visits to the school to liaise with Community Coach and SLT in monitoring attendance patterns of individual pupils.

Below are the set procedures which are followed by the school to raise standards in attendance. These procedures are follow The LEAs 5 Step Attendance Approach.

- Community Coach monitors attendance every two weeks.
- If monitoring reveals that a child's attendance has deteriorated, a First Letter will be sent to the parents.
- If there is no improvement then a Second Letter will be sent.
- If there is still no improvement a referral will be made to the SAO
- The SAO will then send a SAO Letter One out to the parents and perform a home visit
- The Community Coach, SLT and the SAO will monitor attendance closely to see if attendance improves

- If there is no improvement. The SAO and SLT will arrange a meeting at Kitchener Primary School to seek ways to work with the family to improve attendance
- If poor attendance continues, the SAO will write to the family explaining that no illness will be authorised and a Fixed Penalty Notice fine could be issued by the school.
- If attendance still does not improve the SAO will refer the family to EWS for further investigation and legal action. This could result in prosecution and a fine being issued in line with the LEA Attendance Policy. Children's service will also be notified.

Improving attendance approach

The school will take a 'team around the child' approach to support the child / family in improving attendance. The school understands that most strategies will work in improving attendance however for some families this may be difficult.

We will be sending home attendance letters to keep parents/guardians informed of their child's attendance so we can work together to keep it up or make it better.

If your child's attendance falls below 80% - we will be calling home to check why (Should there be no valid reason clearly stated on the register) The school will work with this families positively to ensure the child has the best possible chance in learning by attending school. Your child's attendance will be monitored to see improvement and letters will be sent home for reminder.

If you child's attendance is below 70% - we will send this information to our SAO – School Attendance Officer who will then contact you directly and may arrange a home visit.

Fixed Penalty Notice

The school may issue a FPN issued for a holiday in term time.

An FPN can also be issued for

Unauthorised absences – minimum of 10 sessions (5 days). No need to be consecutive

- Punctuality – minimum of 10 sessions with a U code within each term
- Unauthorised term time holidays
- Failure of parent to engage with school to improve attendance

Process for issuing a FPN

- School submits request form, registration certificate and evidence to EWS
- The HT and SLT will consider every aspect of a pupil's case before considering whether an FPN would be appropriate. This should include discussions with the SAO and any practitioner who has involvement with or knowledge of the pupil/family. To assist in substantiating the request it is advisory that evidence is gathered from practitioners
- The SLT will make a request for an FPN to be issued using the FPN form issued by EWS
- EWS will respond to the request within 10 school days

- EWS will send a warning letter to parent/guardian. Parent/Guardian have 15 days (3 school weeks) to respond and supply evidence
- No unauthorised absences must occur during this 15 day period
- During this 15 day period the school will carry out stringent monitoring and not authorise absences without collating appropriate evidence

FPN cost to parents

An FPN is £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days (but within 42 days of receipt). If the FPN is not paid in full by the end of the 42 days the local authority must either:

- Prosecute parents/carers in the usual way using section 444(1) and (1A) of the Education Act 1996) or
- Withdraw the FPN (in limited circumstances as set out in this Code of Conduct)
- Schools will not be responsible for collection of fines

If a family does not pay the fine then prosecution procedures will take place in the Magistrate's Court under Section 441 of the Education Act. An FPN cannot be paid in instalments. Once an FPN has been issued a parent cannot appeal. When the parents receive a warning letter, parents can appeal against the FPN.

Class teachers are also responsible for informing the Deputy-Headteacher of pupils whose attendance pattern is a matter of concern. They can inform the SLT of their concerns verbally and by email. A First Response system is used to contact parents of the targeted group when their child is absent. This is recorded on an electronic file by the administrator and SLT.

Rewarding Pupils

The school will implement a mixture of strategies every year, the school recognises that one approach does not work for all. With the School Council, the school will decide annually which approach worked well and which did not.

As of 2023

Assemblies and certificates – to celebrate improved attendance and 95 % to 100% attendance, the school will have certificates handed out to all children at the end of every half term. This will be reviewed annually.

The school will have weekly class attendance races where the highest percentage attendance will move one place up the race track, whoever reaches the end destination will have a pizza party or something the class has chosen to do as a class.

Role of parents

Parents can encourage good attendance by:

- having a regular bedtime and morning routine

- preparing for the morning routine by packing a bag the night before and setting out uniform
- talking together about all the fun their child will have at school
- arranging routine medical appointments, outings and holidays out of school hours
- talking to their child's teacher if there are any concerns or anxieties
- working with their child to develop healthy hygiene practices

If you are facing difficulties getting your child into school, it is important to discuss this with school at the earliest opportunity.

We are here to help.

The school reinforces the message that regular and punctual attendance is important through newsletters and posters every term. Parents also receive a print-out of their child's registration certificate in their Pupil Progress Profile (end of term report). This enables parents to monitor and review the attendance pattern of their children. The school also sends attendance leaflets during the first open evening in the autumn term.

Role of the Governing Body

The Governing Body is informed of progress made in improving attendance and meeting the actions set out in this policy. The Headteacher and Governing Body work collaboratively to explore strategies that will continue to improve overall pupil attendance.

Appendix

The City of Cardiff Council has now asked head teachers not to authorise requests for a holiday in term-time. There is no right that enables parents and carers to take a child out of school for a term-time holiday.

*Please note in relation to taking a holiday in term time, Head teachers retain discretion to authorise holidays and are able to assess individual and exceptional circumstances.

To put this in context, schools are open to pupils on 190 days of the year which leaves 175 days for holidays and visiting family.

It is unacceptable to take your child out of school for any of the following reasons:

- To look after brothers or sisters
- Shopping trips
- Days off for birthdays
- To visit relatives
- Sleeping in

- Arriving late for school
- Minding the house
- To go on day trips or holidays

Reasonable adjustments can be made for Disabled pupils and pupils who are carers. Arrangements are to be discussed and agreed with the SLT.

There will be times when your child cannot go to school, this is known as an 'Authorised Absence', and the school must be told in advance. Your school can only authorise an absence if:

- Your child is too ill to attend school
- They have a dental or medical appointment
- There is a bereavement of a relative
- There is a need for religious observance eg Eid, Diwali' – one day will be authorised for Eid, Diwali, Vaisakhi etc