KINGSLAND SCHOOL: ATTENDANCE POLICY

PARENT VERSION

Kingsland School strive to work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships, and working together to put the right support in place.

Kingsland School recognises that attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils. Good attendance at Kingsland School is paramount to pupil achievement, alongside setting high expectations for every pupil, communicating expectations clearly to pupils and parents, analysing data to target improvement efforts and working effectively with the local authority and local partner to overcome barriers to attendance.

Our school attendance policy aims to:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Endeavour to encourage all children to attend to receive a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and individual needs
- Set high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Recognise that attendance improvement does not happen in isolation and it is prioritised in wider improvement strategies
- Ensure every child has access to a full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

Securing good attendance is the responsibility of all, and Kingsland School aim for effective practices for improvement within the curriculum, behaviour policy, bullying, inclusive provision and pastoral support.

The most vital part of encouraging good attendance is to ensure that school is a place where:

- Children want to come
- Children are treated with respect and feel valued
- Needs are recognised and addressed
- All children can experience success within a rich, relevant and diverse curriculum.

Kingsland School recognises that in order to meet the aims of the attendance policy, school staff must work to meet the complex and profound needs of the school pupil population. We also recognise that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school.

<u>Daily Attendance Routines</u>

- The school day begins at 9:00am and ends at 3:30pm
- Pupils who are brought to school by parents are let into school at 8:50am
- Pupils who are brought into school by local authority transport services are let into school at 9:00am
- Registers will close at 9:30am in the morning, allowing for 30 minutes of transition into school. This is to ensure that the complex needs of pupils, differing modes of transport into school and transition into classrooms is calm, orderly and supportive of individual needs
- Parents are expected to contact the school office as soon as possible on the first day of unplanned absence to report their child absent
- Where absences are not explained, parents will be contact by the school office between 9:30 – 10:30am
- Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. The school may ask parents to provide viable medical evidence where there is a genuine concern.

Attendance Support and Strategies

Kingsland School strive to build positive, respectful relationships between home and school for the foundation of good attendance. Communicating with parents will ensure that the best placed person in school works with and supports the family. This person will be instructed to work with the family following the headteacher's analysis of attendance. Kingsland School will work with families to develop specific approaches for attendance in line with individual needs.

In the first instance, Kingsland School will:

Support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance.
Where barriers are outside of the school's control, Kingsland School will seek to work with pupils and parents to access any support that they may need voluntarily. This may involve:

- Phone calls to parents
- Meetings with parents
- Support with home strategies to support regulation and behaviour
- Offering a place on in-school parent training workshops
- Support from in-school Parent Support Workers
- Liaising with onsite school nurses re medical issues
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place, and a phased return to school is considered for pupils who display Emotional Based School Avoidance
- Referrals to agencies for additional support

Where absence intensifies, or is not improving, the support provided will also increase and will involve the school working in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners. This may involve:

- Voluntary early help assessment
- Expectation for parents to contact the school when their child is absent to explain the reason and put processes in place to contact parents on each day of absence where a reason has not been provided. If absence continues without explanation, further contact will be made in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- Identify pupils who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals
- Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps
- Formal letter from the Headteacher outlining the concerns and next steps
- Formal conversations with parents which may include the School Attendance Support Team from the local authority
- Explanations to parents of the impact of persistent and severe absences on the pupil, and potential need for legal intervention in the future
- Revisiting support strategies listed above
- Headteacher to make School Attendance Support Team (Education Welfare Officer EWO) aware of individual pupil attendance concerns so joint monitoring takes place.

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, Kingsland School will work with the local authority to:

- Inform School Attendance Support Team (EWO) of individual attendance concerns to jointly manage the case
- All strategies listed above will continue to be implemented in attempts to increase attendance levels
- Regularly inform parents about attendance and absence levels, avoiding headline percentages and focusing on the amount of time missed and the impact on the child's learning
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of the pupil to discuss attendance and engagement at school, and other professionals where applicable (e.g. team around the school)
- Expect parents to contact the school when their child is absent to explain the reason and put processes in place to contact parents on each day of absence where a reason has not been provided. If absence continues without explanation, further contact will be made in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- Work with the School Attendance Support Team (EWO) to consider whether formal support should be put in place in the form of a parenting contract or an education supervision order

- Work with the School Attendance Support Team (EWO) to consider whether to issue a fixed penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the absence rate.

Granting Leaves of Absence

Pupil absence for the purposes of medical or dental appointments will be authorised when advanced notice is given. Parents are encouraged to make these appointments out of school hours; however where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum time necessary.

Kingsland School will consider applications for a term-time leave of absence from parents/carers on an individual basis, taking into account specific facts and circumstance and relevant background context behind the request. Parents and carers must wait for a written response from the headteacher, otherwise the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

The headteacher may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances' to consider. Applications for a leave of absence where exceptional circumstances are involved must be made in advance in writing to the headteacher by parents/carers. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school.

Parents do not have authorised entitlement to take children on holiday during term time. However, due to the complex needs of pupils at Kingsland School, the school will authorise term time holidays when 'exceptional circumstances' related to those needs justify authorising the holiday.

Valid reasons for authorised absence includes:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (as detailed above)
- Pupils needing to travel at quieter periods due to needs arising from their diagnosis e.g. autism, medical needs, challenging behaviour
- Holidays given by charities who support disabled children
- Religious observance where the day is set apart by the religious body to which to child's parents belong
- Traveller pupil who are travelling for occupational purposes – absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school.

Children with Complex Medical Needs

Kingsland School caters for a cohort of children who have complex medical needs. Where these medical needs require short-term or long-term medical care that results in persistent absence from school, a member of the senior management team will liaise with the family and services involved with the child to support as necessary.

Persistent and Severe Absence

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), Kingsland School may put targeted support in place (listed in section 4 of this policy) to consider reasons for absence and work to remove any barriers to attendance.

Severely absent children with absence rates of 50% or less will be given particular focus, as these children are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners.

Attendance Legal Intervention

Kingsland School will work with families, local services and the local authority to consider the full range of legal interventions once voluntary and formal support has been put into place. The school will work with the local authority to consider individual circumstances of a family, and whether the use of the following should be implemented to change parental behaviour in relation to attendance:

- Attendance contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices.

In August 2024, the Department for Education released statutory guidance which requires local authorities to issue penalty notices. The local authority has a requirement to issue penalty notices to parents where they have failed to ensure their child regularly attends school where they are registered. The Department for Education 'Working together to improve school attendance' statutory guidance (2024) states that schools should not have a blanket approach of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements based on each individual case. The threshold for penalty notices is 10 sessions, or 5 days of equivalent unauthorised absence, in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The Education Act (1996) sets out circumstances in which fixed penalty notices will not be issued including:

- Pupils prevented from attending school due to ill health, or any unavoidable cause
- Pupils being granted leave of absence by the school
- Absence on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong
- The local authority were under a duty to provide transport to the school and have failed to do so
- The local authority Local Code of Conduct outlines details and arrangements for issuing fixed penalty notices, which all schools within the Wakefield district must adhere to.

Kingsland School will work closely with parents, the local authority and supporting services to ensure voluntary support is in place to improve attendance.

The full version of our attendance policy is available on the school website at https://www.kingsland.wakefield.sch.uk/policies/