



November 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

### **School Attendance**

This letter provides a clear outline of our absence procedures and the school's and Local Authority's responses to low pupil attendance. Our Governors support us and Education Welfare Service in promoting high levels of attendance and will take action where there are unsatisfactory reasons for absence. Please see our [Attendance policy](#).

We believe that in order for a pupil to fully benefit from their education, good attendance is crucial. However, there will be times when absence is unavoidable and acceptable. This letter explains the approach we are following to manage attendance.

#### Types of Absence

Each absence is classed as authorised or unauthorised. Absences are coded as authorised where reasons are considered valid and unauthorised where no explanation for absence are given, or request for absence has been refused.

#### Acceptable Reasons

The following reasons are acceptable:

- Illness where attendance would be detrimental to the child or the wider class and school community
- Unavoidable medical appointments
- Other absence authorised after discussion and agreement with the head of school

#### Illness and First Day Call

If your child is unable to attend school through illness you should inform us by telephone on the first day of absence before 9.30am. Alternatively, you can email us at: [admin@kingsbridge-pri.devon.sch.uk](mailto:admin@kingsbridge-pri.devon.sch.uk). If you do not supply us with this information, we have a duty to contact you so that we can be sure of the child's whereabouts as this is a safeguarding measure. If we have concerns over excessive absence patterns through illness we will need to discuss this with parents and carers in order to gain a better understanding of the problems and to offer support – for example by involving the School Nursing Team or Educational Welfare Service.

#### Medical/Dental Appointments

It is generally better if these can be arranged outside school hours, but we know this is not always possible. Where children need to attend such appointments during the school day it is important that parents come to the school office and a member of staff will collect your child from class. If possible, please let the class teacher or office know in advance that your child



will be leaving school for an appointment. Medical and dental appointments count as authorised absences.

#### Emergency Occasions

There are some occasions e.g. bereavements, family problems, etc., where it may be inappropriate for children to attend school; we will be sympathetic to such needs.

#### Lateness

Please try to ensure that your child arrives at school in time for registration; this is undertaken at 9.00 am each day. Meeting and exchanging news with friends before school is important for the children's social development. Lateness causes problems over registration marks and lunch numbers. Also, the children feel uncomfortable arriving in class late when they may have missed instructions for their first lesson.

#### Pupil poor attendance

Anything below 95% is poor and if attendance falls below this we will have serious concerns. Below 90% is regarded as persistent absence by the DfE. We monitor attendance regularly and report to Education Welfare Service any attendance issues below 90%.

#### Holidays

As of September 2013, an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 came in to force and greater clarity was introduced to the issue of schools authorising absence requests. These changes reinforced the Government's view that every minute of every school day is vital and that pupils should only be granted authorised absences by the school in 'exceptional circumstances'.

A family holiday is not normally considered by the Government to be an 'exceptional circumstance' and therefore will not be authorised by this school.

I must take this opportunity to remind you, that should you choose to take your child out of school without the authorisation of the school, then Parental Responsibility Measures could be instigated. This could mean receiving any of the following;

- A Penalty Notice
- A summons to the Magistrate Court which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment for up to 3 months.

Schools are required to notify the Local Authority if a pupil has a number of unauthorised absences. Unauthorised absences can be acquired when;

- 1) Leave has been requested, but the circumstances are such that the school is unable to authorise the leave and it is taken anyway.
- 2) Leave is not requested and/or the school has grounds to believe that the child has been taken out of school for an avoidable reason (example – a family holiday). Only the Head of School can authorise an absence. This year there have been occasions when schools have been notified that the pupil is sick, but the school later discovers and reasonably believes that the reason given for the absence is not genuine.

3) A child continually arrives late after the registration period has closed.

This school will be notifying the Local Authority in all of the circumstances listed above.

Should a Penalty Notice be issued as a result of unauthorised absence then one notice will be issued to each parent/carer for each child involved. Currently if you receive a school absence penalty notice you have 3 options:

- **Option 1:** Within 21 calendar days of receipt of the penalty notice, pay £60.
- **Option 2:** Between 22 and 28 calendar days after receipt of the penalty notice, pay £120.
- **Option 3:** Do not pay the penalty notice. In such cases, you will be automatically summoned to appear in court for an offence under Section 444(1) Education Act 1996.

We understand the disappointment that the refusal of a leave request may cause and we apologise, but as you can appreciate this policy represents the school's responsibility and commitment towards providing your child's education and supporting their future life opportunities. We hope you will support us by ensuring that your son/daughter obtains the maximum benefit from their time at school by attending punctually for the 190 days each year that the law requires (unless prevented from doing so by an unavoidable circumstances).

Thank you for your anticipated support in this matter.

Yours sincerely



**Gareth Howells**  
**Head of School**



**Tess Coulthard**  
**Executive Headteacher**