



# KATHERINE WARRINGTON SCHOOL

## STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

**Reviewed and adopted by Education Committee in December 2024**

**Date of next review: December 2026**

The Senior Leadership Team Attendance Lead is **Sarah Hobson, Deputy Headteacher**

The school staff member students and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is **Chrissy Dicks, Attendance Manager**

All queries can be made by emailing **[admin@kwschool.co.uk](mailto:admin@kwschool.co.uk)**

The school's link Trustee with responsibility for monitoring attendance is **Dani Cook**.

# KATHERINE WARINGTON SCHOOL

## Student Attendance Policy December 2024

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## **Rationale**

Students cannot learn if they do not attend school. We aim to create an environment and opportunities which will make young people want to come to school. However, the school will use all measures at its disposal to address issues relating to poor attendance, high persistent absence or persistent lateness.

## **Introduction**

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent/carer to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents/carers decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly and on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend, medical appointments or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and be on time every day the school is open (unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable).

It is very important, therefore, that students attend regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

This Policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding.
- Ensure every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Ensure that students succeed whilst at school.
- Ensure that students have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

Our Policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which students feel safe, secure, and valued.
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

## **Why Regular Attendance is so important**

Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines and may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Regular attendance at school is a parent's/carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law which may result in prosecution.

## **Promoting Regular Attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents/carers, students and all members of school staff.

To help us all focus on this, as a school we will:

- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance
- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools.
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families.
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters and website.
- Promote the benefits of high attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law.
- Recognise successful attendance in classes or groups through assemblies and tutor time.
- Celebrate good or improving attendance with recognition letters to students and parents/carers from the Headteacher
- Recognition for the form with the highest attendance every half term.
- A summer grand prize draw for students who achieve 100% attendance in any school term

## **Understanding Types of Absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either **Authorised** or **Unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Each half day is known as a session.

**Authorised absences** are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although in some circumstances you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

**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 School or the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U' Late after registers close. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however, is counted as an absence for the session. School registers close at 9am daily
- Shopping trips.
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents/carers to medical appointments.
- Their own or family birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends.
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

Children can sometimes be reluctant to attend school for a variety of reasons. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and can create more barriers to education. In cases like this please contact the school's Attendance Manager or their Head of Year

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A student becomes a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more of schooling across the school year, for any reason. Absence at this level risks doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents'/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absences 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 parents/carers will be informed of this immediately.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our attendance monitoring and pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our students and their parents/carers are the responsibility of our Attendance Manager who will offer support and record actions where there are issues affecting attendance. The Attendance Manager is also responsible for referring cases where there is poor attendance to the Local Authority Attendance Support Specialists at Herts County Council who work strategically and offer support to schools to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance.

Parents/Carers are expected to work with the school and local authority to address any attendance concerns. Parents/Carers should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the

school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken which may be in the form of a Penalty Notice or other legal options available to the Local Authority such as prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

### **Absence Procedures for Parents/Carers**

If a child is absent due to illness, urgent appointments or other reasons parents/carers must:

- Inform the school of absences preferably before 8.30am or at the latest by 9.00am when our registers close, on the first day of absence and every subsequent day thereafter.
- Absences can be logged using the Arbor Parent Portal APP, which is the school's preferred method for reporting absences. A guide on how to do this can be found [here](#).
- Parents/Carers can call the 24 hour school absence line on 01582 314800 or the school office on 01582 314777. Both numbers have an answerphone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call. Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, it may be necessary for the school to call back to further clarify the classification of the absence.
- Email [absence@kwschool.co.uk](mailto:absence@kwschool.co.uk)
  - Please provide your child's name and tutor group.
  - Please give as much detail as possible for the reason of absence avoiding using terms such as 'unwell' or 'under the weather'.
  - If you fail to contact the school to inform us of your child's absence, this may be referred to our safeguarding team.
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested (where the school has reasonable doubt as to the authenticity of the absences) if your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents/carers and school staff can consider the advice contained within the [DfE Guidance on School Absence and Childhood Illness](#).

**If a child is absent and we have not been notified, we are likely to:**

- Text and telephone parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them.
- Invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Manager and/or Pastoral Leaders, Heads of Year or Headteacher if absences persist.

Please note that informing the school is a key responsibility of parents/carers. When staff from both the attendance and safeguarding team take time out of their day to chase families, it detracts from the support we can offer to students in school.

Where possible, please give plenty of notice for any planned absence (e.g. hospital appointments). We would appreciate all dental and non-urgent doctor appointments being made out of school hours.

If you feel you would like support with your child's attendance or well-being, please do not hesitate to contact their Head of Year.

### **Telephone numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence. The school needs to have contact numbers for parents/carers at all times. Parents/Carers should make sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't, important information may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and all students must aim to be in school by 8.25am for an 8.30am start. If a child misses the start of the day, they may miss work, vital information and news for the day. Late arrivals also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the student and can encourage additional absence.

### **How we manage lateness**

The school day starts at **8.30am** and students are expected to be in school **before** that time. Daily school staff will undertake a 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school.

Registers are marked at **8.30am** and students will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. Lateness will result in a next day detention. Parents/carers will be informed of this via email.

Students arriving after 8.30am are required to come into school via the school office and sign in giving a valid reason using the school Inventory system.

At **9.00am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with school regulations, if a child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

If a child has a persistent late record, parents/carers will be asked to meet with the Head of Year and/or Attendance Manager to resolve the problem. However, parents/carers can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time. Unauthorised lateness could result in the school seeking advice and guidance for the Local Authority Attendance Team.

### **Understanding barriers to attendance**

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are

best resolved between the school, the parents/carers, and the child. If a parent/carer thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can consider a [Families First Assessment](#), use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Family Support Worker, or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include students who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these students; however, we will work with families and students to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate. In circumstances where a child cannot attend school due to medical reasons, we follow the [guidelines stipulated by the Department for Education](#) (DfE).

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all students who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

The contact details of the school attendance team for students and parents/carers for more detailed support on attendance are the Attendance Managers who can be contacted on 01582 314777 or [attendandance@kwschool.co.uk](mailto:attendandance@kwschool.co.uk)

### **School Attendance and the Law**

New legislation was passed in August 2024, [The School Attendance \(student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) which introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education ([Education Act 1996](#)). Parents/Carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents/Carers may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The law allows schools to consider individual requests to authorise a future avoidable absence. However, before the school can authorise any such requests, they must satisfy themselves that there are exceptional circumstances which justify such a decision. It is entirely the responsibility of the



parent/carer submitting the request to provide sufficient information/evidence in order to establish this fact. The request for leave must come from a parent/carer with whom the child normally resides.

If a child then stays away from school for more than the authorised period this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and could be quoted in a prosecution for poor attendance.

In the case of unexpected extended absence, it is advisable that the parent/carer fully informs the school as to the reasons. If a child is removed from roll, there is no guarantee that the child will regain a place at the school.

### **National Framework for Penalty Notices**

Parents/Carers are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. When parents engage early, we almost always see positive results with improved attendance. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may consider the issue a fixed penalty notice warning. We will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the student's attendance fail and unauthorised absences persist, the school can use sanctions as detailed below.

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (coded as G - family Holiday Not Agreed, O - Unauthorised Absence and/or U - Late after Registers Close within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent/carer (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent/carer, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent/carer may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent/carer is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

### **Avoidable Absence in Term Time**

**There is no entitlement in law for students to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours.** In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

The School Attendance (student Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time

unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the headteacher or his designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and **all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school.** The school will usually consider that the parent/carer who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and that all parents/carers who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent/carer removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and Hertfordshire Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent/carer believed to have allowed the absence.

**The need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute as an exceptional circumstance.**

At Katherine Warington School, 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as: The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).

The headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the school, the authorising of the absences will be conditional on the child(ren) attending satisfactorily up to the date covered by this request.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence.

### **What you should consider**

Research suggests that students who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed, as some students find this more difficult than others, especially with certain subjects. This may affect test results and can be particularly harmful if the child is studying for final year examinations. As well as having implications, significant periods of absences can also make it difficult when re-engaging with friendships.

## **School Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives**

The school has targets to improve attendance and every child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **96%** attendance and we will keep parents/carers updated regularly about progress to this level and how their child's attendance compares. However, our target is to achieve higher than 96% because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our students can be amongst the best in the County.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletter and we ask for your full support.

## **Deletion from Roll**

For any student leaving Katherine Warrington School other than at the end of year 11, parents/carers are required to write to the Headteacher to advise him, providing the the following information: Child's name, form, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and may appropriately safeguard all our students, even those who leave us.

It is crucial that parents/carers keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for the student and key family members, in case of emergency.

Under [Education \(Student Support\) Regulations 2006](#), all schools are **legally required** to notify their Local Authority of **every new entry** to the **admission register** within five days of the student being enrolled. In addition to this, **every deletion** from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that student, and in any event no later than the time at which the student's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a student's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the student has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.

## **Absence data**

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual students or groups of students when their attendance needs to improve, and schools are required to submit student attendance data to the Department for Education on a daily basis [Education \(Information about Individual students\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#). Persistently and severely absent students are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking, as increased absence affects attainment. We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

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## **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and students to establish the best way of ensuring as high a level of attendance as possible.

If you require any support or advice in relation to attendance at Katherine Warrington School, please don't hesitate to contact the school's Attendance Managers on 01582 314777 or [attendance@kwschool.co.uk](mailto:attendance@kwschool.co.uk)