

Kesh Primary School and Kesh Community Nursery



Pupil Attendance Policy

Reviewed in: April 2022

Ratified by the Board of Governors on: 5 April 2022

Next Review in: April 2025

Attendance Policy

Rationale

The Department of Education believes regular school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education.

In Kesh Primary School, we believe pupil attendance and educational achievement are inextricably linked. We want every child to have full access to the school curriculum and to reach their potential.

Absenteeism can be detrimental to a child's education and accordingly we would encourage parents/guardians to arrange family holidays, medical appointments etc. outside school hours, where possible.

Article 28: All children have the right to a good quality education. They should be encouraged to do so to the highest level they can. (UNCRC)

Information for Parents

As a school we aim to:

- Maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 90%
- Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance
- Maintain good time keeping

Good attendance is important because:

Statistics show a direct link between poor attendance and under-achievement. Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically, find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with, find learning more satisfying and settle into school more readily.

- Ensuring your child attends school regularly. Absence should only happen when your child is significantly ill, there should be a symptom, feeling unwell is not enough. Remember we may ask for medical verification where illness-absence is frequent or prolonged. We also acknowledge the necessity of taking days off when ill, in-line with Public Health Agency Guidelines on infection control. To access the latest version of PHA guidelines please visit:
https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Guidance_on_infection_control_in%20schools_poster.pdf
- Arranging all non-emergency medical appointments out of school hours or during school holidays, when possible.
- Keeping the school updated by telephone/email/on-line platform by message or letter if your child has an extended period of absence.
- If there is a change in your circumstances, if you are leaving the area or changing schools.
- Making sure we always have your current contact numbers/email addresses; this includes all telephone numbers and emergency or other contact details.

The School will:

- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls and letters as necessary
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in our annual letters, the school prospectus, on-line, open evenings and in pupil annual reports
- Publish your child's attendance rate on her/his annual school report
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance and punctuality.

Children with 90% attendance or less, whatever the reason for the absence, are classified as persistent absentees. If we have concerns, we will discuss this with you and may also make a referral to the Local Authority School Attendance Officer who visits the school regularly to review and support attendance and punctuality issues.

Please remember that absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his/her learning. A good understanding of the work and good progress can only take place when the child is in the classroom regularly and on time.

Authorised Absence

- Some absences are allowed by law and are known as "authorised absences". For example: if a child is ill, religious observance etc.
- We realise that there are rare, unavoidable occasions which can cause your child to be absent. When possible, please inform the school of such absences as soon as possible.

Unauthorised Absence

- Where there is no explanation for an absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory the school will not be able to authorise the absences. These are known as "unauthorised absences".
- A child's unauthorised absences are an offence for the parent. Examples of unauthorised absence are: going for a family day out; sleeping in after a late night; going shopping; because it is your child's birthday, going on a family holiday, frequent unfounded claims of illness (child or family member) as a reason for absence.

Punctuality

- It is important to be on time as the first part of the school day is used to give out instructions, set or group children or organise schoolwork for the rest of that day. It is also a time for children to settle down by reading or another quiet activity so they are ready for lessons immediately after registration.
- Morning registration is at 9.20am. This is the time your child should be on school grounds. The morning play session gives the children an opportunity to socialise and for the children to gain a deeper sense of community and belonging.
- Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and potentially embarrassing for your child. Arrival, particularly if the lateness is persistent, after the close of registration at 9.20am will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with the DFE guidance; this is effectively an absence for the morning session.

- The school day ends at 1.50pm/3.10pm, please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day or from any after school activity.
- *Please note that due to Covid-19 the school has opted a staggered finish time, due to our reliance on school buses. The children will be outside from 3.05pm to facilitate their safe boarding onto the school bus and that the other children are socially distanced for their collection from the school gates.

Role of the Governors

The Board of Governors reviews school attendance figures and targets and ensure attendance is placed as an agenda item regularly (as considered appropriate and necessary by the school principal. A summary and evaluation of the school's strategy for promoting pupil attendance at the school is to be included in the School Development Plan.

Role of Parents/ Guardians

Parents /Guardians have a legal duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude with regard to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise. Once the child is registered in school, the parent /guardian has a legal duty to ensure that the child regularly attends school.

Your child should only miss school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance.

It is the parent's / guardian's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence.

This should be confirmed by:

- Telephone call/email/On-line Platform message on the morning of any absence to give us the reason and tell us when the child is likely to return to school.

Remember we may ask for medical verification where illness-absence is frequent or prolonged. We also acknowledge the necessity of taking days off when ill, in-line with Public Health Agency Guidelines on infection control.

We ask you to arrange all non-emergency medical appointments out of school hours or during school holidays

If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with home learning materials or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.

Pupils can come in to school from 8.45am and registration remains open until 9:20am. It is the responsibility of parents/ guardians to ensure that their child is punctual.

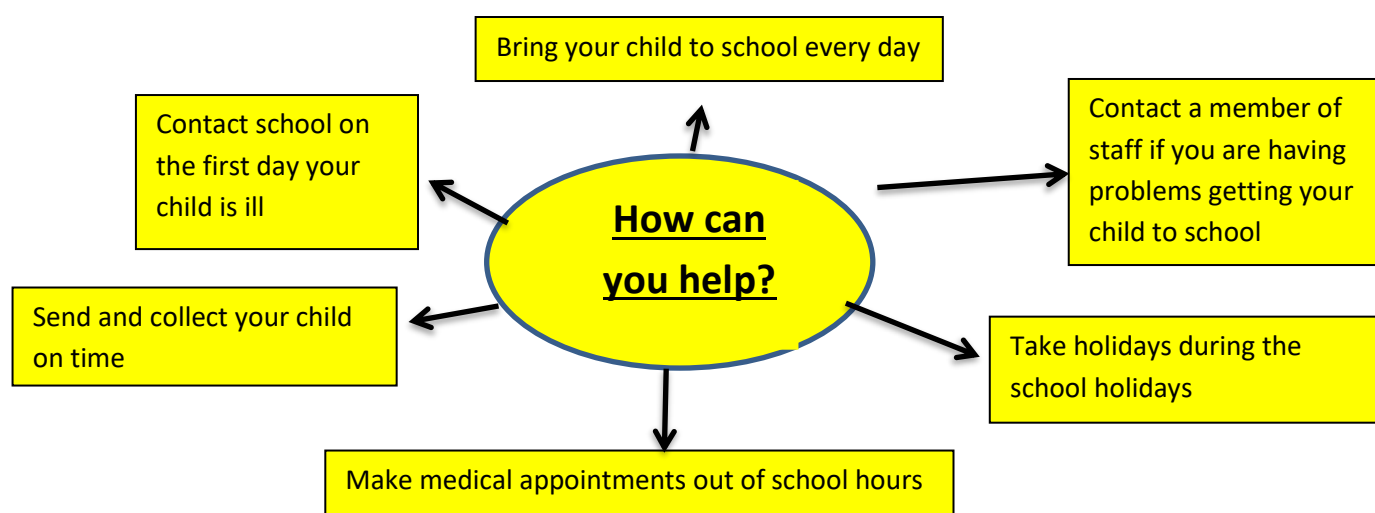
The Principal may contact you if lateness persists. In circumstances such as bad weather, the school may keep the register open for a longer period.

If your child appears reluctant to attend school, please discuss the matter promptly with the class teacher or Principal to ensure that both you and your child receive maximum support.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than to go to Secondary school) parents are asked to:

Give the school comprehensive information about their new address, plans including any date of a move and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing



Role of Pupils

Each pupil at Kesh Primary School must attend school punctually and regularly.

If the child has been absent from school, an email/written note/online platform message from the child's parent/guardian must be provided to the child's teacher on return to school.

Procedures for Managing Non-attendance

When a telephone call, email or on-line message has not been received explaining a child's absence from school, every effort will be made to establish the reason for the pupil's absence at the earliest possible stage. Contact mechanisms such as Department of Education's absence notification form will be issued.

Attendance at school is not an option, even 90% attendance means your child misses one day every two weeks. While there are valid reasons as to why pupils may be absent from school, parents should aim to achieve maximum attendance if possible. Every school day counts and a day missed is a lost learning opportunity.

When attendance falls close to 90% or if your child is absent on a number of odd days, you can expect the principal to contact you to discuss your child's absence from school.

A school absence letter will be issued when levels of absence become a 'Cause for Concern'. When attendance falls below 85%, you can expect the Education Welfare Service to be in contact.

Education Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) has a duty to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education.

If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85%, they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address and improve school attendance.

Family Holiday during Term Time

Kesh Primary School discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.

Signed _____ Chairman of Board of Governors

_____ Principal

Date: 5th April 2022

Involved in the consultation of the policy - All members of the teaching staff

Shared with staff – April 2022

Review Date – April 2025