

Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) has highlighted absence from school as a major concern and is committed to tackling this issue. Children of compulsory school age who fail to attend regularly are very likely to underachieve and may become victims of anti-social or criminal behaviour. Children become of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. Ensuring regular school attendance at an early age promotes positive patterns and therefore decreases the risk of disaffection and anti-social behaviour in later years.

This policy aims to promote regular attendance of all children of compulsory school age who attend Kearsley West Primary and Nursery School.

In light of the COVID pandemic there is an even greater need to ensure that children attend school regularly. Children who are extremely vulnerable, or children who live with clinically vulnerable relatives, and therefore at greater risk from being very ill if they contracted COVID, will be supported to maintain consistent attendance.

School Attendance Policy Statement

Kearsley West Primary and Nursery School seeks to ensure that all children, regardless of age, aptitude, ability, gender, religion, disability and any special needs, receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential.

We will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels secure.

All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

The school will seek to establish effective systems of incentives and rewards which acknowledge the efforts of pupils to attend regularly and punctually. We will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives Kearsley West will establish an effective system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

The Law

The responsibility of promoting and ensuring regular school attendance is a multi-partnership. However, according to the 1996 Education Act, ultimately it is the parents'/carers' responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

Fixed penalty notices can be levied by the Local Authority on parents who allow their children to be off school without good and proper reason.

Categories of Absence

Authorised absence – the school will authorise an absence upon receipt of a written explanation. The school will only authorise an absence when the Headteacher is satisfied that the explanation stated is reasonable. These may include the following circumstances.

- Illness
- Medical and dental appointments (although the school does strongly encourage these to be made out of school hours where possible)
- Exclusion from school
- Days of religious observance (exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong)
- Educational visit
- Approved sporting activity
- Family bereavements

Unauthorised absence –

- Truancy
- Cases of absence where recognised procedures are not followed

Family Holidays in Term Time –

We do not authorise holidays in term time.

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parents or carers may be prosecuted if their child does not attend school regularly and their absence is unauthorised (or in other words, the school cannot or has not given permission for them to be off school) Bolton Council has the power to issue Penalty Notices as an alternative to prosecution. Penalty notices are issued to parents or carers who are considered capable of but are unwilling to work towards improving their child's attendance.

The Governing Body and the Headteacher will always work with parents/carers and pupils to improve their attendance but, in line with government guidance, will be able to apply to issue Penalty Notices where a pupil has missed at least 10 sessions (5 school days) due to unauthorised absence over a period of 10 rolling school weeks.

The Governing Body and the Headteacher agree that no permission will be given for pupils in Year 2 or Year 6. Other cases may be considered on an individual basis but will be discouraged except in exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher may authorise, in such circumstances, 10 days of absence during the pupil's time in Early Years (Nursery and Reception), and 10 days of absence during the other school years in total.

Parents of pupils with large amounts of unauthorised absence will be referred to the Early Intervention Team and may be fined.

Kearsley West strongly discourages holidays during term time as this interrupts continuity of learning.

Special Occasions –

Kearsley West will consider each request individually and will take the following into account.

- The nature of the event
- The frequency
- Has advance notice been given?
- The overall attendance pattern of the child

Parents are advised that absence for a birthday or a shopping trip will **not** be authorised. The school may be willing to authorise absence for such events as a family wedding. Where the absence is due to an unauthorised holiday during term time, any illness which is immediately before/after a known holiday, may not be authorised'.

Punctuality –

Kearsley West requests that all parents ensure that their children arrive at school promptly as late arrival causes disruption to the whole class and the teacher.

- The school day begins at 09.00 and children should arrive at the school site no earlier than 08.40, unless attending the Breakfast Club. Parents should also note that the school cannot take responsibility for children at school before 08.45
- Parents are expected to ensure that children are present at registration
- Pupils arriving after 09.00 will be marked as late
- Pupils arriving after 09.15 will be marked as unauthorised absence for that school session.

School Responsibility

The school will –

- Raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance by highlighting expectations in the school prospectus, assemblies and parents meetings
- Monitor attendance effectively and follow up absences appropriately
- Encourage a welcoming and positive atmosphere in which pupils feel safe and their presence is valued
- Reward pupils' successes in achieving high standards

School Response to Absence and Lateness

- School will make **immediate** contact with parents if there is concern about an absentee
- School will endeavour to make contact with parents on the first day of absence if no notification has been received
- The school and the Early Intervention Team will work closely together to regularly monitor all pupils' attendance
- Parents of pupils who regularly arrive late or who are consistently poor attenders will receive a letter from school highlighting the Headteacher's concern
- Should there be no improvement following a letter from school, the parents will be asked into school to discuss the situation with the Headteacher
- Should school intervention fail to resolve issues of poor attendance and punctuality, the matter will be referred to the Early Intervention Team.
- If a child is on the Child Protection Register, the Early Intervention Team will be notified on the first day of absence
- An Early Help Assessment will be carried out to explore any emerging attendance concerns.

What the School Expects from Parents

- Parents need to be aware that they are ultimately legally responsible for the regular school attendance of their children
- Parents should ensure that children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed, and in a condition to learn
- Parents should see themselves as partners with school in the education of their children and must endeavour to instill a respect for education and for those who deliver it
- Parents should contact school on the first day of absence and send a letter into school when they return, stating the reason for absence
- In cases of continued absence, parents should keep school informed of progress at regular intervals
- Parents must avoid taking family holidays in term time
- Parents are urged to contact the class teacher or the Headteacher should their child seem worried or upset about coming into school

What the School Expects from Pupils

- Children should try their best to attend school regularly and punctually
- Children should always report to the school office when late

The Early Intervention Team

- The Early Intervention Team aims to work in partnership with school and parents to encourage regular/punctual attendance and ensure the general well being of all pupils

- The school will also work with the Integrated Front Door in order to provide support for families who are struggling within the home to instil routines and clear boundaries which may then impact on their child's attendance.

Governors

- The Governors will be involved in maintaining school practices to promote and improve school attendance and punctuality
- This school Attendance Policy is fully supported by the Governing Body of Kearsley West Nursery and Primary School

..... Headteacher

..... Chair of Governors

Policy owner: Jackie Fitton

Version 2

Last reviewed October 2024

Review date: October 2027