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# POLICY

## Attendance Policy

**Approved and adopted by the Standards Committee  
November 2020**

**Next Review Date  
November 2021**

Published to College Website - Yes

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## **Attendance Policy**

King Edward VI Community College is committed to providing a full and effective educational experience for all students. We believe that if students are to benefit from education, excellent attendance is essential. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and can lead to educational and social disadvantage. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and we will work with students and families to address these as quickly as possible.

Every student has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent college attendance and punctuality for all. Should a student not be attending college regularly, it may raise a safeguarding concern that the college must follow up in line with safeguarding procedures.

For our students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital all students are at college, on time, every day that the college is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines that your child develops around attendance and punctuality at college are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on excellent attendance.

## **Objectives**

- To encourage full attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure that parents are aware of any attendance or punctuality concerns.
- To work with the Education Welfare Service and other appropriate agencies to support good attendance and punctuality.
- To record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies.
- To demonstrate clearly stated procedures for swift follow-up when there is a concern about an absence.
- To acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance through our reward system.
- To ensure a consistent approach throughout the college.
- To improve attainment and achievement of students through improved levels of attendance.

## **Statutory Duty of Schools and Parents**

The Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers to ensure their children receive effective, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools and colleges are responsible for recording student attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. At King Edward VI Community College an electronic registration system is in place, which monitors registration during every lesson.

Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring their children attend college. This extends to ensuring students arrive at college on time, properly attired, with correct equipment and in a condition to learn. The college will make every effort to promote good attendance, giving advice and support where needed.

## **The Educational Welfare Service (EWS) and School Attendance**

The EWS is part of the Devon Local Authority (the LA). Its aim is to ensure that every child has the opportunity to benefit from a full time education by attending school regularly. The EWS can help and advise parents/carers who may be experiencing difficulties that prevent this. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school regularly and the EWS expects parents/carers to do all that is necessary to make sure this happens.

## **Attendance Guidance and Expectations during COVID-19 pandemic**

From the start of the autumn term attendance will be mandatory and usual rules on attendance apply. Please see addendum 1 and 2 for further information on all matter of attendance relating to COVID-19. We will update all addendums in line with government guidance as this is released.

## **Statutory Attendance Responsibilities**

There is a legal responsibility to have a morning and afternoon registration.

The college will:

- Record and monitor attendance and absence.
- Use the electronic registration system to record and monitor the attendance of all lessons during the school day to ensure the safety and welfare of all students.
- Record and monitor punctuality of all students and, where necessary, inform parents/carers of persistent lateness and apply appropriate consequences.
- Only authorise student's absence in exceptional circumstances.
- Use an automated calling system to follow up daily absences, when the reason for absence is unknown.
- Maintain strong home school liaison to inform and support families with their child's attendance.
- Work closely with the Education Welfare Officer and other agencies where there are concerns about attendance
- Support children and their families to identify and resolve any issues which may prevent full attendance at King Edward VI Community College.
- Promote the importance of attendance through assemblies and celebrating students who have achieved 100% attendance or have overcome barriers in their health.

## **Parents/carers should:**

- Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child regularly attends the school at which they are registered. Failure to fulfil this duty may result in the Local Authority taking legal action in accordance with s444 Education Act 1996.
- Parents/Carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
- Parents/Carers are responsible for immediately informing the college of the reason for any absence by phone call, or where possible, in person on the first morning of any absence and thereafter. This should be done by 9.15am
- Parents should not arrange family absences in term time.
- Parents/Carers can expect the college to keep them fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record.
- Parents/Carers should not take their child on holiday in term time and are to be made aware of the potential consequences of a Penalty Notice being issued or subsequent prosecution of doing so without the college's prior written permission.

## **Reporting Absences**

### **Up to 3 days**

- It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to inform the college of a student's absence before 9.15am on every day of absence.
- Absences that are not communicated to the college will not be authorised.
- The college will operate a first day calling system and the parents of every absent student will be contacted by the attendance officer, where no reason for absence has been given. This communication will be via the colleges automated calling system.

## **Absence of 3 or more days**

In the case of long term illness the college should be notified so that teachers can set work and appropriate support can be offered.

## **Methods of Reporting Absences**

In any case of absence parents/carers should contact the college by one of the following methods:

- By phone to the Attendance Officer. When calling please clearly state, student's name and registration group
- Via email [studentabsences@kingedwardvi.devon.sch.uk](mailto:studentabsences@kingedwardvi.devon.sch.uk)
- Personal contact with Attendance Officer at the school via a note passed to the tutor

## **Authorised/Unauthorised absence**

All absences must be explained by a parent/carer. The college will then decide whether or not it will authorise the absence.

Acceptable reasons for the authorisation of absences are:

- Illness (1)
- Exceptional family circumstances such as a bereavement
- Days of religious observance
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (2)
- Absences from the school will not be authorised for:
- Absences not agreed, this will always include first and last day of half terms unless medical evidence provided
- Birthdays, if ill on a birthday medical evidence will be required
- Shopping
- Looking after family members
- Visiting relatives

### **(1) Illness**

Medical evidence may be requested where a student has been absent for 3 consecutive days or more due to illness OR where a student's attendance is below 90% and/or the child is regularly away from college due to illness. Failure to provide evidence when requested may result in the absences being recorded as unauthorised. Medical evidence can be in the form of a copy of a prescription, medication, call log or an appointment card showing name of child and date they visited.

If a student is diagnosed with a medical condition, evidence should be provided.

Referral to School Nurse/Family Support or Early Help may be made to offer advice and support to the family.

### **(2) Medical/dental appointments**

All routine (non-emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of school hours. Should a student need to have an appointment during school hours, evidence of this appointment will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the school unauthorising the absence. All non-emergency appointments will not be authorised.

## **Holidays in term time/ Leave of absence**

The principal may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances and should determine the number of school days a student can be away from school if the leave is granted.

### **Requesting the absence**

All requests for a student to be absent from college during term time must be made in writing at least a half term in advance of the proposed absence by completing the absence request form obtainable from the school office or from the college website.

The principal or person with delegated responsibility will decide whether or not to authorise the absence, on a case by case basis, and will only do so where there are exceptional circumstances.

Where a decision is made not to authorise a request for leave of absence, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s), notifying them of that decision.

If the absence is unauthorised and still taken, the school may request the Local Authority to consider issuing a Penalty Notice (PN) to the parent(s)/carer(s) for the unauthorised absence. Only one PN will be issued per parent/carer per child within a two year period. This means that if you paid a PN and then committed a further offence contrary to s444 (1) Education Act 1996 within the next two years, you are likely to be summonsed to Court for the most recent offence. If convicted, you could receive a fine of up to £1000. If you are convicted of an offence under s444 (1) Education Act 1996, and you commit a further offence within the next 5 years, you will be summonsed for the more serious offence contrary to s444 (1A) Education Act 1996. If convicted, you could receive a fine of up to £2500 or up to 3 months imprisonment.

If a student is absent from school during term time and no prior absence request has been made, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s) to inform them that the absence has not been authorised and that a Penalty Notice may be issued. If the parent(s)/carer(s) can demonstrate that the child's absence during this time was due to an exceptional circumstance and that an absence request could not have been made in advance of the said absence, then a referral for legal action will not be made to the Local Authority.

### **Monitoring of students attendance when it causes concern**

- The school will set targets to encourage good attendance and to address any concerns.
- Contact will be made to parents/carers to advise them of poor attendance
- Students may be placed on a daily report or attendance action plan for lateness or poor attendance
- Parents/carers may be asked to come in to college to discuss their child's attendance and work with the college to improve this
- Parents/carers may be requested to provide medical evidence if there are high numbers of absences due to illness.
- A referral will be made to the EWO who may consider legal action.

### **Truancy**

It is the legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child receives a full and efficient education and therefore attends all lessons. Parents/carers will be informed by the college if their child has been identified as truanting from the college. Parents/carers are expected to fully support attendance to lessons, implementing sanctions/support at home to deter continued truancy. Persistent cases may be referred to the EWO for consideration of legal action.

### **Punctuality**

There are two negative results caused by students who constantly arrive late. These are:

- The loss of education suffered by the student which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time at school.
- The disruption to other students in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child attends full time education and arrives at college on time. Punctuality is monitored by the college and parents will be contacted if their child is not arriving to college on time.

**College starts at 8.50am.** All students are expected to be in college for 8.45 am ready for registration to begin at 8.50am.

**Any student who is late to college [after 8.50 am]** must sign in to college to collect an 'L' code in the register and to ensure that we know of their late arrival.

**Students arriving after 9.00 am** must sign in with the attendance officer to collect a 'U' code as the legal registration period for the school has been closed.

All student's attendance records will be checked fortnightly for "lates before registers close (L)" and "lates after registers close (U)". Where these lates cumulate to 3 or more in a half term the college will send a letter to the parents/carers of the pupil in question to discuss any support needs and ways of accessing support.

**\*\* 10 or more 'late after registers close' (U) codes could result in the college making a referral to the Local Authority for legal action to be taken or result in college sanctions \*\* A child is late after registers close when they arrive after 9.00 am.**

It is our expectation that the parent/carer will support and work with the college to improve punctuality.

### **Attendance letters**

All students with attendance below 95% will be analysed on a fortnightly basis by the Senior Leaders and administration team, in order to identify persistent absentees and those students at risk of becoming **persistent absentees**. (Persistent absentees are students with 90% attendance and below or who have missed 19 days which equates to 38 sessions during the course of the academic year).

Absences may be **unauthorised** and marked as an 'O' code by the college where no reason has been provided by the parent/carer for an absence or if the college feels the reason for the absence is unacceptable. A member of the Head of House or Safeguarding Team may telephone for clarification.

Where a pupil's attendance is below 95%, the following actions should be taken:

**Attendance letter 1** will be sent advising the parent that their child's attendance has dropped below 95%.

**Attendance letter 2** will be sent for student attendance below 93%, after letter 1 or later in the same academic year if attendance has not improved, inviting parents/carers to communicate with the tutor/Head of House or safeguarding support team as considered appropriate by the College.

**Attendance letter 3** will be sent if parents/carers do not make any attempt to communicate with the college and/or there is still no improvement following letters 1 and 2, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with the Assistant Principal, Attendance Lead. Parental rights to authorise their own child's illness may be removed at this stage and any further illness will need to be logged with a medical professional to enable the provision of medical evidence prior to the absence being given an 'I' code. In the absence of medical evidence, any absence will be unauthorised and given an 'O' code and subject to escalation legally. Attendance letter 3 will be sent for attendance below 90%.

**Attendance Letter 4/ EWO Referral** will be triggered by attendance below 90% or 10 unauthorised absences. Attendance letter 4 will be written confirmation that your child's attendance has been referred to the EWO who may themselves invite parents/carers to a legal meeting to review attendance and consider legal action.

***\* The college may use its discretion to send/trigger the absence letters at any stage to best address the level of absence on a case by case level. Rapid decline in attendance or historic poor attendance may result in the immediate advancement to Attendance letter 3 without prior warning.***

***\*\* Parent/carer rights to authorise their child's illness may be reinstated should attendance increase above 93%. In the event of this, the college will confirm the change in writing.***

**Rewards**

The college will aim to celebrate sustained and improved attendance through a number of ways.

- Students may receive positive praise points through Class Charts from their Tutors or Heads of House.
- Students may receive college postcards to celebrate improved or sustained attendance
- Students may receive positive letters from their Head of House celebrating their efforts towards improved or sustained attendance.

This policy was adopted by the KEVICC Standards Committee

Signed:.....

(Chair of Governors)

Signed:.....

(Principal)

Date:

Date of Next Review: November 2021