

EKC Group
Attendance and Punctuality Policy for Junior Colleges 14-16 Direct Entry

Statement of Intent

EKC Group Junior Colleges are committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling college experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils, and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

Junior College staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance.

Parental Responsibility

Parents and Carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child, and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the Junior College on the first day and each consecutive day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should regularly update the junior college and inform them when their child is returning.

Pupils are expected to arrive in time for morning registration. Please refer to your specific Junior College timetable for details. All pupils that arrive late must report to the relevant staff member where the reason for lateness is recorded and validated by the parent/carer.

The Role of the Junior College Staff

Within the Junior Colleges, there is a whole college responsibility and approach for improving college attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Lead for Junior College has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues and will challenge staff around the processes being taken to improve this data.

A register is completed within the first 5 minutes of all lessons, with the first lesson of the day classing as the AM mark and the first lesson after lunch classing as the PM mark. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).

The Registers will reflect the following marks:

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- Present (/)
- Late (L) with number of minutes notes.
- Unauthorised Absence (O)
- Authorised absence (Various Codes dependent on reason). This will still count towards your child's absent rate but will provide reason to potentially prevent Local Authority intervention. Only a parent/carer can confirm reason for absence, and it is at the Junior Colleges leads discretion as to if this is authorised/unauthorised, with them requesting the appropriate code to be inputted.

All absence will count towards the pupil's overall attendance figure and unauthorised absence will be reported to KCC in cases where it falls below 90%.

It is also the responsibility of the Mentor(s) to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents/Carers are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call and this is noted on Pro Monitor.
- Where there has been no communication, call is made to parents requesting reasons for absence. In cases of persistent absence and no contact from parents/carer, KCC should be notified.
- Parents/Carers have access regularly to their child's attendance via Pro Portal with concerns over attendance being communicated as per the timeline approach below.

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- 90 - 95% attendance – Supportive communication with parents to ensure absence doesn't fall below 90%
- Below 90% is referred to as persistent absence (PA). Intervention should begin using template letters.
- Where the level of persistent unauthorised absence has not improved and continues to drop below 90%, the Junior College will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the Junior College will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the Junior College may make an Early Help Notification.

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the college roll without consultation between the Lead for Junior College and the Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below: -

- Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances: -
- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her following a home visit
- The family has notified the school in writing that they are leaving the area, but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Lateness

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Please refer to the relevant Junior College timetable for registration times. The register is taken from the beginning of each lesson and closes 5 minutes into the lesson. Pupils arriving after these times will be marked as (L) with the number of minutes noted. Reasons for lateness should be logged on pro monitor for mentors to monitor.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed will be discussed with parents in a meeting of concern and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

Authorised Absence

Only the Lead for Junior College can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Lead for Junior College is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation should they have concerns over the legitimacy and recurrence of absence. An email or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over college dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in a Front Door referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer to get support, guidance and intervention where necessary. Once all supportive measures are exhausted, there may be consideration of prosecution. The Junior college will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance and Punctuality issues

Junior Colleges can submit a request for parents to be given a penalty notice fine for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age and when all other avenues of support have been exhausted. If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to request a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Senior Pre 16 Lead, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year.

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- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time despite EKC Group not supporting 'in term' holidays.
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are guilty of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission prior the event for activity that contributes positively to academic studies or personal development such as sporting competitions or an interview)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

Parent request to take Child out of College for Holiday.

EKC Group do not authorise holidays taken in term time. If the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of college.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.