

Headteacher: Mr D. Whales | Chair of Governors: Mr T. French

15th September 2023

Dear Parent / Carer,

We are writing to you to stress the importance of your son/daughter attending school, on time, every day. This should apply unless there is a truly exceptional circumstance. Unfortunately, in recent years many of our students are missing far too much schooling. Whilst we appreciate that the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath had a significant impact on school attendance, we now need to raise the bar in terms of our expectations of school attendance and punctuality, alongside our improved standards of uniform, equipment and behaviour.

School attendance is a hot topic at the moment and a key focus of the UK government. The Child's Commissioner, Dame Rachel De Souza, has said: **"September is a critical moment. It's our chance for a system reset and to shift the dial on school attendance. We must be ambitious and aim for 100 per cent attendance. Our children deserve that"**. The Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty, who many of you will remember from the daily Covid press conferences, has written to all schools about the importance of full attendance. He explains **"There is wide agreement among health professionals and educational professionals that school attendance is vital to the life chances of children and young people. Being in school improves health, wellbeing and socialisation throughout the life course. The greatest benefits come from children and young people attending school regularly"**.

Professor Whitty's letter also reminds Parents/Carers of reasons why they should and should not be keeping their children off school. He writes: **"It is usually appropriate for parents and carers to send their children to school with mild respiratory illnesses. This would include general cold symptoms: a minor cough, runny nose or sore throat. However, children should not be sent to school if they have a temperature of 38°C or above. We would encourage you to share the NHS 'Is my child too ill for school?' guidance (<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>) with parents and carers in your schools and communities which has further information"**.

Please [click here](#) for a link to our website for the current NHS guidance

We thought it would be useful to remind parents/carers of the process for requesting permission for their son or daughter to miss school for medical appointments, absences for part of a day and requests for holiday absences during term time (*only* considered for those with *exceptional* circumstances). The purpose of outlining these arrangements, at the start of the academic year, is to avoid any confusion, disappointment or uncertainty, in the future.

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Permission for Student Absence – Parents/Carers (from September 2023) <i>Please include in all communications your child's name, year and tutor group</i>	
Reason	How to request permission for the absence
Dental and Medical appointments (Every effort should be made to make these outside of school time)	Contact the School Office / call the student absence line. Provide an appointment card to show when signing in/out after the appointment
Religious Observance (normally 1 day per year)	Headteacher by completing a leave of absence request form (at least 2 weeks' notice)
Participation in Significant Events (e.g. major sporting events, performing arts events, etc)	Headteacher by completing a leave of absence request form (at least 2 weeks' notice)
Family or Close Friend's Funeral (Single day only)	Headteacher by completing a leave of absence request form (at least 2 weeks' notice)
University Visits/6th Form Absences	Contact Mr Abbott by email
Longer Absences – Exceptional Circumstances	Headteacher by completing a leave of absence request form (at least 2 weeks notice)

Contacting us regarding student absences

Parents must inform us if their child is not going to be in school. They should phone in every day, unless you have provided us with a medical certificate signing your child off for an extended period. Please ensure you phone us before 9 AM. You can leave a message on the student absence line if you are unable to speak to a member of the reception team.

Holidays During Term Time

We'd like to take this opportunity to remind parents of the Academy's very clear policy on student absence during term time. This is outlined in our Attendance policy, a copy of which is on the school website here:

<https://www.kscs.org.uk/information/policies/attendance-and-punctuality>

As the policy makes clear, the Headteacher has very limited discretion in giving permission for children to miss school for the purpose of a family holiday, in all but the most **exceptional** of circumstances. For the sake of clarification, **seeking to travel at a cheaper time would not constitute such 'exceptional' circumstances**. We would ask parents, please, to avoid the disappointment associated with making such a request by organising their travel arrangements to fall within the published holiday dates, which can be found on the school website.

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If, despite the clear guidance in the policy, parents proceed with their plans to take a holiday during term time without authorisation, a Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority. Further details of the process and charges involved can be found on:

<https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/residents/schools-and-education/attendance/>

Absence for Religious Observance

To obtain permission for your son or daughter to attend a recognised religious festival, which falls within term time, permission should be requested from the Headteacher **in advance of the religious festival, please (the leave of absence form should be submitted at least 2 weeks before the absence).**

Lateness to school

Everybody at Ken Stimpson Academy takes attendance and punctuality very seriously. One of the key roles of a school is to prepare our young people for the world of work. Being able to turn up to work or an appointment on time is vital. Persistent lateness to work will almost inevitably result in a dismissal so getting into the habit of arriving at school on time is a key life skill.

Furthermore, when a pupil arrives late to school, there are many other consequences:

- He or she misses out on essential instructions given at the beginning of lessons. Arriving 5 minutes late each day adds up to missing 3 entire days of school by the end of the year.
- Pupils might feel awkward and embarrassed going into the classroom when everyone else is already settled.
- When one person arrives late everyone loses out as the class is disrupted and the teacher must take time away from the other pupils to explain what is going on for the lesson.
- Students who are frequently late develop a pattern of lateness which often means they arrive late for GCSE or A' Level examinations, negatively affecting their performance in their terminal examinations.

Peterborough City Council require us to issue Penalty Notices for a variety of reasons, including **"persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed contributing to a level of attendance of 90% or below"**. The school will take account of individual circumstances in each case, however, we wish to make it very clear that the following reasons are **not valid reasons** for being late to school:

- "I got up late" or "My alarm did not go off"
- "The bus was late" or "Traffic" (except in exceptional circumstances, such as a breakdown).
- "My taxi was late" (Taxis should be booked at least the evening before; a taxi booked at 8:30 AM is almost certain not to arrive on time)
- "I couldn't find my uniform/coursework / PE kit / etc"
- "My parents made me late"
- "I was taking my brother or sister to school." (This is a parental responsibility and we ask parents to make other arrangements which do not require our students to be late)
- "I had an appointment" or "Mum/Dad had an appointment" (These should be made outside of school term unless it is an emergency or no other option. In such cases an appointment card should be shown to the Attendance Officer at the gate or to Reception staff upon signing in after 9.00 a.m)

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We have reintroduced our **detentions** for students who arrive after 9 AM each day. These will be held on a Wednesday or Friday each week. **Please note, the Year 7-11 gate will be locked at 8:45 am** as students need to be in roll call, reading or Year 11 intervention on time for an 8:45AM start.

In addition to this, Mrs Blackledge and/or the Head of Year will be inviting the parents/carers of those students who are persistently late to school for meetings to discuss how they can improve their attendance and /or punctuality to avoid receiving a fine from the Local Authority.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S Blackledge".

Mrs S Blackledge
Attendance Officer

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "K Abbott".

Mr Kevin Abbott
Assistant Headteacher and Head of Sixth Form