

# Sir Roger Manwood's School



## Attendance and Absence Policy

**Date of Approval: September 2024**

**Date of Next Review: September 2027**

## Overview

Sir Roger Manwood's School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all its students. Regular attendance is critical if they are to achieve their full potential, and benefit from the opportunities presented to them from Year 7 onwards. Therefore, governors, the Headteacher and staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote good attendance.

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 absence was:

- authorised by the school
- due to sickness or an unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not a parent or a sibling)
- due to religious observance
- due to a failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

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

The Headteacher may authorise planned absence in **exceptional** circumstances but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and an essential element for students to maximise their educational opportunities and learning. As was clarified by the Supreme Court's ruling on *Isle of Wight Council v Plath* (6 April 2017) 'regular' does not mean 'evenly spaced' or 'sufficiently often' but 'in accordance with attendance rules' i.e. **to attend for the whole day, on every day the school is open to pupils**. This means that if a non-ill child is taken out of school in term time either without requesting a leave of absence or when a leave of absence is denied, the period of absence will be unauthorised and the child in question will be deemed to have failed to attend school regularly.

If no explanation for a student's unplanned absence is received in writing from a parent (whether for a Sixth Former or Y7 to Y11 student) within 7 days of the absence, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

## Student Responsibility

The register is taken every morning and afternoon session, usually at 8.40 am and immediately after lunch. The exact time may differ on some specific, occasional, days e.g. Sports Day, Open Day, Carol Service Day, last day of term in December and July. Students arriving after these times, whether in Sixth Form or a lower year group, must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late.

Frequent lateness, as well as poor attendance, will be discussed with parents and referral to the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) and/or Education Welfare Officer (EWO) can be made for either reason. Both can also provide grounds for prosecution or the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

In the Sixth Form, frequent lateness and/or poor attendance may result in the withdrawal of a student's bursary award.

## Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child/ren attend school for the whole day every day that the school is open to pupils, and that they 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. Poor attendance undermines their education.

Frequent lateness, as well as poor attendance, will be discussed with parents and referral to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) can be made for either reason. Both can also provide grounds for prosecution or the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

### **Unplanned Absences**

It is a parents' responsibility to contact the school every day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue so that all parties know the child is safe.

A parent must either write in (with their signature on the note), telephone or e-mail the Attendance Administrator to explain a student's absence. If no explanation for a student's absence is received within 7 days of the absence, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

It should be noted that a letter, telephone message or email from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence – the final decision as to whether or not any absence is to be authorised lies with the Headteacher, and they are not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. If an absence is not authorised, parents will be notified.

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

- Persistent non-specific illness
- Absence due to a sibling being ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school term dates

### **Planned Absences**

In order for a known, planned absence (e.g. orthodontist appointments, funerals, weddings, etc) to be authorised, parents must request such authorisation **in advance** by completing the School's official Absence Request Form, which can be found on the School website (search 'SRMS Absence Form').

As with unplanned absences, only the Headteacher can authorise such an absence.

In September 2013, the Department for Education amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing a Headteacher's ability to authorise absence for the purpose of a family holiday. Consequently, requests for holidays in term time will not be authorised unless there are **exceptional** circumstances. If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the KCC Attendance Service who could issue a Penalty Notice.

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

- family holidays, including those booked due to a confusion over school term dates
- shopping trips
- treats for birthdays
- medical or dental appointments of more than half a day (unless for a good reason)

## School Responsibility

Marking attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Tutors complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session, marking pupils present, absent or late.

The School's Attendance Administrator will:

- Check that attendance and lateness records are up to date, and chase tutors if they are not
- Contact parents on the first day of absence if no reason for absence has been provided
- Send letters to parents, if parents have not contacted the school, requesting reasons for absence (with a seven-day reply deadline before the absence is deemed unauthorised),
- Enter the appropriate attendance code into the register, where appropriate
- Print off weekly the latest attendance and missing marks reports for tutors and Heads of School

The Attendance Administrator, Key Stage Administrators, Tutors, and Heads of Lower School, Upper School and Sixth Form will follow up absences, including contacting parents when necessary. If, despite their involvement, there is still no improvement, the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral and Wellbeing) will be informed and a referral to the KCC Attendance Service made if appropriate.

Where a child is missing from education (i.e. a family has notified the school that they are leaving the School but no Common Transfer Form or pupil file has been requested by another school, or, the whereabouts of a child is known but the school is unable to contact them despite repeated attempts) KCC guidance will be followed, and a Child Missing from Education referral made. However, no child will be removed from the school roll without consultation between the School and the Inclusion and Attendance Service, and without contact with the successor institution.