

Absence due to Illness

KGS has moved to a new system of having parents/guardians inform us by phone to let us know if pupils are going to be absent from school due to illness. Registration is a legal process which takes place in every class and at Kirkwall Grammar School the school day begins at 8.35am when the register is taken at Tutor Time.

If your child is absent due to illness, please phone the school office before 9.00am and leave a message on the answer machine - explaining the reason why your child will not be in school. Parents will be expected to phone and inform us on each day of illness unless it is a planned absence.

Where the school has not been informed of a pupil's absence, a text message will be sent to the main parental contact number (usually a mobile telephone number) asking them to contact the school to explain why their child is not in school (at this stage choose option 3 and speak directly to a member of the office staff). Parents/guardians/carers are asked to respond to these texts promptly, as there may be a serious reason why a pupil has not reached school in time to be registered.

If there is still no contact after this, another text will be sent in the afternoon and if no explanation is received after this point the absence will be changed to truancy.

IMPORTANT:

The school cannot assume that absent pupils are at home under the safe care and supervision of a parent, guardian or carer.

All parents/guardians/carers have a duty and responsibility to inform the school when and why their child is absent.

Parents/guardians/carers should ensure that the school always has current and up-to-date contact details, including nominated emergency contacts.

Pupils will no longer be required to bring notes from parents unless they require time off school for a planned absence (see below).

Signing In Late

If pupils arrive late at any point in the day, they must sign in at the office with the Duty Officer and give a reason for lateness and provide a note or appointment card.

Signing Out

Pupils need to sign out at the office with the Duty Officer if they have to attend a doctor or dentist appointment etc. They must bring an appointment card/note from a parent. On return to school they must sign back in at Reception.

Sick Bay

If pupils feel ill during the school day they should ask permission from their teacher to go to Sick Bay. If it's necessary to send a pupil home, parents will be contacted. Pupils must not just go home!

Enforced Absence due to Illness

Most pupils are absent for a short period and their return to school is the decision of the parent(s). However, there are instances where pupils must stay off school for a pre-determined period because of the nature of the condition or illness. In most cases, this is usually an instance of vomiting and/or diarrhoea and which brings with it a 48 hour exclusion period from school, ie 48 hours from the last episode of the illness, not from the onset. The exclusion period from school of 48 hours is set out in the 'Communicable Disease & Infection Control' advice from the NHS and parents are respectfully asked to abide by that guidance or any request from the school to keep their child(ren) off for the full exclusion period.

Absence due to Prolonged Ill-Health

Longer periods of pupil absence due to a condition or illness should be communicated to school after parental consultation with the child(ren)'s GP. 'Prolonged' ill-health is usually taken to mean 15 continuous school days, or 20 days of intermittent absence for verified ill-health reasons. If a pupil is unable to attend school due to prolonged ill-health, parent's should discuss the situation with their child's Guidance teacher or Year Head to determine if and how arrangements will be made for education.

Authorised & Unauthorised Absence

The criteria for 'authorised' and 'unauthorised' absences is listed below:

Authorised Absence

- Sickness
- Medical and dental treatment
- Bereavement
- Short-term exceptional domestic circumstances
- Religious observance
- Meetings prior to and in court
- Attendance at or in connection with a Children's Hearing or Care Review
- Weddings of immediate family
- Agreed debates, sports, musical or theatre productions not arranged by or in conjunction with the school
- Sanctioned extended absence in relation to children of travelling families.

Unauthorised Absence

- Unexplained absence is recorded as unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory explanation is subsequently provided
- Truancy (unauthorised absence from school for any period as a result of premeditated or spontaneous action on the part of pupil, parent or both)
- Most family holidays during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

It is really important that parents try to avoid booking holidays during term time. If you are going on holiday you should write to the Head Teacher beforehand asking for permission and the absence will then be recorded appropriately. If the Head Teacher does not give permission before the holiday, it will be recorded as truancy. The Head Teacher may exercise discretion when a parent can prove that work commitments make a family holiday impossible during school holiday times (for example a parent is in the armed services or emergency services). Normally, your employer will need to provide evidence of your work commitments. Absence approved by the Head Teacher on this basis is regarded as authorised absence.

Sometimes pupils will require time off school to attend activities/trips which are not run by the school but which the school supports, eg sports, music etc. If pupils are going on such a trip/activity, parents should also write to the Head Teacher asking for permission and the absence will be recorded appropriately.

Parents from minority ethnic religious communities may request that their children be permitted to be absent from school to celebrate recognised religious events. Absence approved by the Head Teacher on this basis is regarded as authorised absence. Extended leave can also be granted on request for families returning to their country of origin for cultural or care reasons.

If there is no explanation note from a child's parents, absences will be regarded as unauthorised. A supportive approach is taken to unexplained absence, however, the education authority has legal powers to write to, interview or prosecute parents, or refer pupils to the Reporter to the Children's Panel, if necessary.

If a student moves to another school, the pupil must sign a leaver's form indicating the destination school and hand in to the office.

Unplanned Absences (not illness)

There may be unexpected circumstances which mean your child cannot attend school, please inform the school office directly of this (do not leave a message on the absence line).

If you know that your child will be off school, for example if they have an appointment or important meeting to attend, please inform the school office (do not leave a message on the absence line).