



Absence Policy 2021-2022

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**MORE
HOUSE
SCHOOL**

KNIGHTSBRIDGE

Associated Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy - Section C1, no. 1
- KCSIE 2021
- Children Missing Education (2016)

1. Principles

- 1.1. Pupils are expected to attend school every day. Parents have a duty to ensure that their daughters attend school and the school is committed to working with parents to achieve as high a level of attendance as possible.
- 1.2. A pupil should only be absent if the reason is 'unavoidable'. Allowing a child to be absent without good reason is unlawful, and ultimately parents could be fined by the courts.
- 1.3. Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school, not the parents, as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. Hence information about the cause of each absence is always required.
- 1.4. **Attendance**. This includes: field trips and educational visits, home and abroad (such as Activities' Week); participation in or attendance at approved sporting activities.
- 1.5. **Authorised absences** are morning or afternoon sessions where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence and may include:
 - Illness
 - medical or dental appointments (when these cannot be arranged in out-of-school hours)
 - religious observance
 - study leave (but half-days on which girls are in school to study or to sit exams are counted as attendance)
 - work experience
 - exclusion
 - or other unavoidable cause

Only the Head may authorise absence on these grounds:

- approved family reasons (e.g. bereavement, wedding)
- holiday approved in advance by the Head

- 1.6. **Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given and may include keeping a pupil off for trivial reasons. Absence is only to be left as unauthorised when one of the following is true:
 - the girl concerned has played truant
 - the Head has deemed that the absence is unauthorised even though the parents have given permission for the girl's absence (parent-condoned truancy)

Suspected absences of this nature are to be followed up by the Director of Pastoral Care within two weeks of the original absence

- 1.7. Pupils should never be kept off school for reasons such as shopping, looking after the house, or looking after siblings or relatives.

- 1.8. On very rare occasions where a girl needs encouragement to attend school regularly and on time, any problems are best sorted out between the school, parents and the pupil. Problems of this nature will be addressed by the Director of Pastoral Care in conjunction with the form tutor. Intervention of this sort would normally be considered necessary for:
- Girls whose attendance falls below 90% for the period of one half term or whose attendance is deemed to be having a serious or negative impact on her studies
 - Girls who are persistently late to school (after 8.30am)
- 1.9. If problems cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer to the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Education Authority. He or she will also try to resolve difficulties by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve a pupil's attendance have failed, these officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the girl.

See Appendix 1 for further guidance on attendance and lateness procedures.

- 1.10. Parents may wish to contact the Education Welfare Officer themselves for advice. They are independent of the school. Their telephone number is available from the school or by contacting the Local Education Authority.
- 1.11. The school recognises that a child who goes missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect (or even in some circumstances of sexual exploitation, travel to conflict zones, FGM or forced marriage). The school will take account of such factors (and those listed in the Child Protection Policy) in dealing with unauthorised absence through the procedures outlined below and in line with current advice regarding Keeping Children Safe In Education (see Section 2 below).
- 1.12. The school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days.
- 1.13. If a pupil does not arrive at school, or is found to be missing during the school day, the procedures set out in Section 4 of this policy will be followed.

2. Children Missing from Education

2.1 Children missing from education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

2.2 The procedures outlined in this policy are designed to ensure that staff and especially those with particular responsibility for safeguarding to identify pupils who may be at risk at an early stage and prevent them from going missing in the future. More House School adopts the mantra that 'it could happen here' in its approach to absence from education and the possible links to forms of abuse.

2.3 The school addresses this issue with all new staff as part of the induction procedures. Furthermore, it acknowledges the particular vulnerability of pupils who are already known to the LA children's social care and need a social worker (such as those on a child in need or child protection plan) of those who are on the SEN register.

2.4 The DSL, with the support of tutors and the Head of Sixth Form monitors absence data for all pupils and liaises with parents in addressing any concerns (see 1.8 above). Any necessary actions which result are recorded in the weekly safeguarding meeting and on the pupil file as necessary (see also appendix 1).

2.5 If, in the case of a missing child, it was deemed (having made 'reasonable enquiries') the the child was in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral would be made to children's social care or the police informed as necessary.

3. Procedures

More House School applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with absences. With this system, parents can be confident that their daughter has arrived safely at school.

3.1. Illness or Other Legitimate absence

2.1.1. If girls are ill and unable to attend school, parents are requested to contact the school before 8.30am either by email (absent@morehousemail.org.uk), via the school website or by phone on the first, and each subsequent, morning of absence.

2.1.1. If no contact is made by 8.45am, the office will make contact with parents/carers to establish a reason for the absence.

2.1.2. For all absences, parents are asked to email (absent@morehousemail.org.uk), specifying the reason and dates for each period of absence. Notes both written and signed by the parent/guardian can be accepted as an alternative to email and should be handed in to the office staff. Absence cannot be authorised without this procedure.

2.1.6. Girls with planned appointments to the doctor, dentist, etc. should email absent@morehousemail.org.uk or give a note to the office staff at least three days in advance. In these circumstances it is not necessary to telephone or email the school on the day of absence.

2.1.7. If a pupil is absent from school for reasons other than ill health, this must be discussed with the school on each separate occasion. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which are necessary in school time, provided a written explanation is received.

3.2. Holidays

2.2.1. Please note that we ask parents **not** to make holiday arrangements that require their daughters to miss days during term time. Holiday leave in term time will not be granted unless circumstances are exceptional. Our school terms are short and intensive and therefore a relatively long period of holiday is available.

2.2.2. If your daughter needs to be away from school in exceptional circumstances (for example see 1.5 above), a letter requesting permission should be sent to the Head at least a week in advance. With the issue of school attendance and the safeguarding of your daughter being of such importance, email or phone requests of this nature are not considered appropriate by the school. In every case, a letter signed by a parent/guardian will be required to authenticate the request.

4. Registration

4.1. Registration is completed using the Information Management System "ISAMS". If the system is down then a paper copy is taken and the office is informed. The office will complete the registration once the system is running again. A print out is available from the school office for use during a Fire Drill.

3.1. **Morning Registration:** Girls should enter by the No. 24 door. It is important that all girls are in their form rooms by 8.30am each day. All girls must attend a brief registration meeting with their form tutor to start the day from 8.30am - 8.35am as important notices are often given out during this time.

If a girl has a music lesson or other activity that involves her being away from registration, she must report to her form tutor in advance of the registration. No kind of message, written or oral, is acceptable.

3.2. **Afternoon Registration:** All girls are expected to attend registration with their form tutors at 1.55pm.

If a girl has a music lesson or other activity that involves her being away from registration, she must report to her form tutor in advance of the registration. No kind of message, written or oral, is acceptable.

3.3. **Lateness:** Pupils must attend registration on time. Parents are expected to ensure that their daughters are present at morning registration.

Girls arriving between 8.31am and 8.45am are registered by the late duty staff; this information is passed to the office and updated on ISAMS

Girls arriving after 8.45am must enter the No.22 door and sign in at reception; parents are expected to contact the office by way of a note, email or phone call to explain any lateness after 8.45am

Sanctions are imposed for persistent lateness (see 1.8 above and Section C2 Pastoral Care no 1).

5. Missing Pupil Procedures

5.1. **Non-arrival at School:** If a pupil has not attended morning registration and no explanatory message has been received by reception by 8.45am, parents will be contacted via text from the school office. If the parent has not responded to the text by 1045, a phone call will follow to establish the reason for absence. If a parent believes the girl should be in school, the receptionist will check whether the girl is where she is timetabled to be at that time and, if she is not, will inform the Director of Pastoral Care immediately. If the Director of Pastoral Care cannot explain the absence, he or she will inform the Head who will decide on the next steps (see 4.4 below).

5.2. **Missing during the School Day:** If a pupil fails to attend afternoon registration or if she is noted to be absent during a lesson without explanation, the Director of Pastoral Care should be informed immediately. If the Director of Pastoral Care cannot explain the absence, he or she will inform the Head who will decide on the next steps (see 4.4 below).

5.3. **Missing on an educational visit/sports fixture:** If a pupil is found to be missing while on an educational visit or at a sports fixture, an immediate head count should be carried out to ensure other pupils are all present. An accompanying member of staff should alert the manager of the venue and/or search the immediate area as appropriate. If the pupil cannot be located then, depending on the age of the girl and the circumstances in which she is found to be missing, the group leader may need to contact the police immediately. Otherwise, the group leader should inform the school office. The school office must notify the Head who will decide on the next steps (see 4.4 below). If the visit is outside school hours, the group leader should inform their emergency contact.

- 5.4. **Action by the Head:** The Head may ask the caretaker to organise a search of the school site. The Head will contact the girl's parents and then ultimately the police if deemed necessary.
- 5.5. **Records:** The Head will ensure that a record is made of any incident, the action taken and, if applicable, the reason given by the pupil for being missing.

6. Publication of Attendance Information

- 6.1. More House School has a legal duty to promote attendance and to publish its absence figures, if required by the DfE.
- 6.2. The School is usually asked to disclose information on attendance and punctuality when writing references for girls.

Appendix 1 - Procedures for absence and lateness

Attendance

≤ 90% attendance in any half term results in a letter home

≤ 80% attendance in any half term results in a meeting between the parents and Head of

Key Stage*

Lateness

3 lates per half term = detention

9 lates per half term = meeting between parents and the Director of Pastoral Care *

*Should this not result in a marked improvement there will be a further meeting with the Head to discuss further action including the possibility of a referral to the local authority.