



West Kirby Grammar School School Attendance Policy

Introduction

For students at our school to gain the greatest benefit from education it is essential that they attend school regularly and punctually. They should only be absent from school when it is absolutely necessary. 100% attendance is one of the keys to success.

School absence will disrupt a student's learning and may affect their academic progress. Research shows that there is 'a significant association between authorised and unauthorised absence and attainment in all key stages, even when student and school level characteristics have been taken into account' (NFER 2005). It may also disrupt their friendships and impact on their social and emotional development. Students may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly.

School attendance is given a high profile throughout the school because we know how important it is. It is discussed at school assemblies, parents' evenings, staff meetings and governors' meetings. It is also included in all school reports. The school has a system of rewards for students whose attendance is excellent. Certificates are awarded at the Junior Presentation Afternoon to students in Years 7 to 9 who achieve 100% attendance. Students in Years 10 to 13 with 100% attendance will also receive certificates during their end of year assemblies.

Students are expected to be on site and in tutor rooms by 8.50 am each morning. Students who arrive before 8am should wait in the dining room. Those who are on site after the end of the school day, and not in supervised clubs with members of staff, **should be in the resources area of the library.**

Punctuality

Students need to be in school on time at 8.50 am each day when registration begins. It is important that all students make a good start to the day and are ready to learn. If a student arrives after 8.50 am but before 9.30 am (when registers close) they will be given a late mark (L). Students who arrive late are often embarrassed or flustered and may not be in the best frame of mind to begin learning. They may also miss out on something important. If a student arrives after 9.30 am (when registers close) they will need to provide a letter of authorisation covering their lateness for the morning session.

Authorisation of Student Absence

The High Court has confirmed that schools, not parents/carers, authorise absence. A student's attendance forms part of their official school record. Schools have some discretion to authorise planned absences, and are advised to publish guidelines to parents/carers, but retain the right to be flexible in individual cases. What follows is a guide to how reasons for student absence should be communicated to the school, and the school's likely decisions about authorisation. This communication should always come from parents/carers.

1. Illness or Other Unforeseen Absence

If your child/ward is unwell please contact the school by telephone or e-mail on each day of absence. For absences of longer than 4 days, it is no longer necessary to ring each day, but parents/carers should continue to keep the school informed on a regular basis. Such absences will usually be authorised.

Illness at school

If a student is ill in school, she/he should report to the school office; they will notify a member of the management team who will decide whether or not to contact parents/carers. **Students are not permitted to call parents/carers themselves in this instance. If parents/carers do receive a call from their daughter/son/ward, they should tell them to go to the office and then school will contact you in due course. Under no circumstances should students be collected from school without our knowledge.** Such absences will usually be authorised.

Catching up with work

For absences of a week or less, it is the student's responsibility to catch up with work that has been missed. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, please contact the Head of Year who may arrange for work to be sent home, depending on circumstances.

2. Planned Absences during Term

Medical and dental appointments

Medical and dental appointments should be made outside school time whenever possible. If a student does have to leave school for an appointment, please try to make the appointment at the beginning or end of the day so that not too much school is missed.

- If an appointment will result in the student missing the morning registration, either telephone the school on the appointment day and leave details on the absence line, outlining the appointment type and an expected time of arrival at school, or provide a letter to the school prior to the appointment so that it may be noted on the student's record.
- If the appointment will take a student out of school during the day, a letter should be sent in with the student beforehand. The student should then obtain and complete a Permission to Leave School form, from reception or the Pastoral Office. They should then have the form authorised by a Head of Year or member of the management team, who will return the form to them ready for them to sign out. Before leaving school, the student will need to sign out at reception where the form will be authorised to show the student has permission to be off school premises.
- Alternatively, if the appointment has been arranged at the last minute, parents/carers should ring in to school to advise us of the appointment. A permission slip is then completed and signed by the head of year or a member of the senior management team. When the student signs out the receptionist will check that they have been authorised to leave the premises.

Whenever a student leaves the school site, he or she **must sign out at reception to ensure that her/his absence is taken into account in the event of an emergency.** When the student returns from the appointment, he or she must sign back in. This type of absence will usually be authorised.

For all the following types of planned absence, a Leave of Absence Form (available from the school office and on the school website) should be completed and sent to the Attendance Officer.

Pantomimes and Other Licensed Productions

If a student is involved in a production which involves rehearsals and performances during school time, the school will **consider** authorising absence of up to 10 days **as long as the production is licensed.** A Leave of Absence form should be completed. If the student's attendance is below average or the school has significant concerns about the impact this absence would have on her/his progress, the absence will not be authorised. No such absences will be authorised during the run up to examination periods, or during mock exams.

Sixth form only – University Open Days

A total of three days leave for students to attend University Open Days will be authorised. Students wishing to visit a university should obtain a form from the Sixth Form Office and complete it accordingly before having it authorised by Mrs Noble or Mrs Harris.

Other Planned Absences

Requests for a planned day of absence, for example to attend a family ceremony or music examination, should be made **a month in advance.** The Headteacher will, of course, be flexible in cases where such notice is not possible. The school will consider the request, taking into account the reasons given and the student's attendance record. The Leave of Absence form contains examples of the school's likely decision. The form will be returned to the parent/carer with the school's decision.

Holidays

The Department of Education announced important changes to legislation regarding family holidays taken in term time, which came into force in September 2013. The message was clear: parents/carers are expected to take family holidays during school holidays and should not take students on holiday in term time. Headteachers may only grant leave of absence in **exceptional circumstances.** A request of authorised absence in such circumstances should be made to the Headteacher prior to completing holiday arrangements. The request for authorised absence should explain why the holiday has to be taken in the school term and why the circumstances are exceptional.

At West Kirby Grammar School we expect parents/carers to avoid taking their daughters/sons/wards on holiday during term time. If, however, there are exceptional family reasons why the **only annual family holiday** cannot be taken during the school holidays and the duration is no more than ten school days, the school will consider authorising the absence. This will usually only be for reasons of a family crisis or when one parent's employment prevents a holiday from being taken in the school holiday period. Parents/Carers planning such a holiday should contact the school at least a month in advance having completed a Leave of

Absence form. On this form, they should state clearly the reasons for the need to take the holiday during the school term.

Requests will be dealt with on an individual basis; your daughter's/son's/ward's attendance record as well as the reasons given on the Leave of Absence form will be taken into account. **No holidays will be authorised during the run up to examination periods, or during mock examinations.** Where a month's notice has been provided, you will be notified of the school's decision by letter.

Parents/carers are advised not to book holidays before consulting the school, as any absences not approved will be recorded as unauthorised.

Taken from the Leave of Absence form:

Examples of Requests and the School's Likely Decision

Examples of request	The school's likely decision
Funerals and other significant family events	Will authorise
Attendance at sporting events, concerts or festivals	Will not authorise
Participation in sporting or artistic events not arranged by the school	Will consider authorisation depending on nature of event and attendance record of student
Theatrical performances and related rehearsals	Will consider authorisation if student performance licence granted, depending on timing and attendance record of student
Only family holiday having to be taken in term time because of one parent's working arrangements	Will consider authorisation
Day or days at the start or end of terms to allow for flight availability etc.	Will not authorise
Planned absence for any reason at the start of the academic year, in the run up to external examinations, during periods of controlled assessments or school examination periods	Will not authorise

Poor and persistent attendance

Average levels of attendance at the school over the past few years have remained at around 96%. We regard attendance under this level as a cause for concern, and heads of year will contact parents/carers if it drops below 90%. Parents/Carers may be invited to a meeting or school attendance panel. The meeting will give an opportunity to discuss any concerns and to agree an action plan to support the family.

If a student's attendance falls below 85% they are defined by the Department of Education as 'persistently absent'. At this level their progress and development may be significantly impaired. The case may be referred to the Education Social Worker who will contact the family and offer to visit them at home to address any concerns and offer support. If attendance does not subsequently improve, an Attendance Panel Meeting will be called by the Educational Welfare Officer, and parental contracts or legal proceedings may follow.

Parents'/Carers' legal responsibilities

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers to ensure that their student receive full-time education which suits their needs. Parents/Carers who fail in this duty may be prosecuted via the courts and fined up to £2500 or, in some cases, imprisoned. Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 provides that, as an alternative to prosecution, parents/carers may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice if their student's absence from school is unauthorised. These may be issued if a student has 10 days unauthorised absence in any one term. Fixed Penalty Notices are for £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid within 28 days.



West Kirby Grammar School Leave of Absence Request Form

Parents/Carers who take their children on holiday during term time without prior authorisation by the school may be fined under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act.

Name of Student		Form	
Proposed Dates of Absence (Inclusive)	From / / Time (if applicable):	To / / Time (if applicable):	
Reason for Absence	Holiday Please fill in the section below to give further details	Other reason Please give explanation here:	
Further information <i>i.e. evidence from employer why holiday cannot be taken during school holidays</i>	Reason why this holiday has to be taken in term time: Is this the only family holiday this academic year? Other exceptional circumstances or reasons:		

This completed form must be submitted to the Headteacher, Mrs Duffy, not less than one month before the proposed period of absence. The school will be flexible in cases where such notice is clearly not possible. Parents/Carers are strongly advised to seek authorised absence before they book tickets. In any case, permission will not normally be granted for planned absence lasting more than 10 school days in each academic year.

Examples of Requests and the School's Likely Decision

Examples of request	The school's likely decision
Funerals and other significant family events	Will authorise
Attendance at sporting events, concerts or festivals	Will not authorise
Participation in sporting or artistic events not arranged by the school	Will consider authorisation depending on nature of event and attendance record of pupil*
Theatrical performances and related rehearsals	Will consider authorisation if child performance licence granted, depending on timing and attendance record of student*
Only family holiday having to be taken in term time because of parent/carer's working arrangements	Will authorise
Day or days at the start or end of terms to allow for flight availability etc.	Will not authorise
Planned absence for any reason at the start of the academic year, in the run up to external examinations, during periods of controlled assessments or school examination periods	Will not authorise

*The average attendance rate for students in Years 7 to 11 is approximately 96% at West Kirby Grammar School. Students with attendance below this are unlikely to be granted authorised leave of absence for this type of request.

Catching up on missed work

If your son/daughter/ward misses lessons, it is his/her responsibility to arrange methods of catching up with his/her teachers. Teachers are not expected to give individual support on his/her return to school. Please sign below to show that you have explained this to your son/daughter/ward.

Signed		Date / /	
	Parent/Carer		
Signed		Authorised/not authorised	
	Headteacher	Comment:	
	Date / /		

For Office Use Only

AO/HOY/KC/AMD	% Attendance	
Absence Sessions to date	Sessions Authorised	