

Attendance Policy

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Next review due: August 2026



KING'S COLLEGE SCHOOL

PANAMA

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POLICY STATEMENT

At King's College School Panama, we believe that excellent attendance and punctuality are fundamental to academic achievement, wellbeing and personal development. Every school day matters. Regular attendance enables students to make sustained academic progress, develop secure friendships, build confidence and resilience, and benefit fully from the academic, sporting and co-curricular opportunities provided by the school.

We therefore expect all students to strive for 100% attendance and punctuality. Parents and guardians have a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time each day. The school works in close partnership with families to secure strong attendance and will intervene where standards fall below expectations.

Registers are taken twice daily for all students at the start of the morning session and at the start of the afternoon session. The admission and attendance registers constitute official school records and are maintained in accordance with Panamanian law and British Schools Overseas requirements. These registers are legal documents and are subject to inspection. The school will follow the procedures outlined in this policy where attendance or punctuality falls below expected standards. This policy is published and available to all parents and guardians.

As a British School Overseas, King's College School Panama is required to meet the expectations of both the Ministry of Education of Panama (MEDUCA) and the BSO Inspectorate. Attendance data and registers will be made available for inspection by authorised bodies and shared where required in line with regulatory obligations.

Attendance is a safeguarding priority. Where safeguarding concerns already exist, or where a student's attendance raises concerns about their safety or welfare, the school will act without delay. If a student fails to attend school as expected, leaves the site without permission or cannot be located during the school day, the school will contact parents or guardians immediately. Where necessary, and in line with Panamanian safeguarding procedures, the school will involve MEDUCA, SENNIAF or the police to ensure the student's safety.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all sections of King's College School Panama, including Early Years, Primary and Secondary. It applies to all students on roll, all teaching and support staff, all members of the Senior Leadership Team and all parents or guardians.

The policy covers attendance during the full school day, including morning and afternoon registration sessions, lesson time, enrichment activities delivered within the school day and any supervised off site educational provision.

It applies to attendance on the school premises and to approved educational activities where students are registered as present but are engaged in supervised learning away from the school site.

All members of the school community are expected to comply with this policy.

DETAILS

1. Expectations

- Parents or guardians are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time each day. Regular attendance and punctuality are essential to academic progress, wellbeing and safeguarding.
- The school day begins at 08:00 and finishes at 15:15. The school site opens at 07:45. Students are expected to arrive in sufficient time to be in their registration room or classroom ready for the start of the school day. All students are expected to attend every timetabled lesson punctually unless an authorised absence has been agreed.
- The school provides supervision only during published school hours. The school does not accept responsibility for students who arrive before 07:45 or remain on site after 15:15 unless they are enrolled in a supervised enrichment activity or other authorised school provision.

2. Parent Contact Details

- Parents or guardians must ensure that the school holds accurate and up to date contact information at all times. Any change of address, telephone number or emergency contact details must be notified to the school in writing without delay.
- For safeguarding purposes, the school requires at least two named adult contacts for every student. These contacts must be individuals who can assume responsibility for the child in the event of illness, emergency or absence where a parent or guardian is not immediately contactable.
- Where a parent or guardian delegates care of their child to another responsible adult, the school must be informed in advance in writing using the official school form. The notification must clearly state the name of the responsible adult and the duration of the arrangement.

3. Daily Registration

- The school registers students twice daily, at the start of the morning session and at the start of the afternoon session. This ensures accurate monitoring of attendance and supports the school's duty of care.
- The morning register is taken between 08:00 and 08:10. The afternoon register is taken at 13:15. All students must be present in their designated registration room or classroom at these times.
- Registers are completed electronically using iSAMS and are an official record of attendance. Accurate completion of registers is a professional responsibility of staff.
- Registration serves both an educational and safeguarding function. It confirms which students are present on site and enables the school to respond promptly where a student is absent or unaccounted for.

4. Signing out during the school day

- Parents or guardians should make every effort to arrange medical, dental or other appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, parents or guardians must notify the school in advance by emailing kcsp.reception@kings.education and informing the class teacher or form tutor no later than the 09:10 on which the appointment occurs.
- Students may only leave the school site during the school day with prior parental permission and with the authorisation of the school. Before leaving, students must sign out at Reception using the official Signing In and Out system. The record must clearly state the time of departure, destination and reason for leaving, for example illness, medical appointment or approved study leave.

- The signing in and out system forms part of the school's safeguarding procedures and must be completed accurately. Reception staff and Section Leaders will monitor this system regularly to ensure it is functioning effectively and that no student leaves the site without proper authorisation.
- Students in Years 12 and 13 may be granted permission to sign out independently where written parental consent has been provided and the school is satisfied that the student can do so responsibly. This is a privilege, not a right. The school may withdraw this privilege at any time where there are concerns regarding attendance, punctuality, academic progress, conduct or the student's health, safety or welfare.
- All students must sign back in at Reception immediately upon returning to the school site. Failure to follow signing in and out procedures will be treated as a breach of school expectations and may result in further action.

5. Absence - Notifying the School

- **First Day of Absence Notification** - If a student is unable to attend school due to illness or other unavoidable circumstances, parents or guardians must inform the school on the first day of absence before 08:30. Notification should be made by email to kcsp.reception@kings.education and directly to the class teacher or form tutor. Providing timely notification enables the school to fulfil its safeguarding responsibilities and ensure that every student is accounted for.
- **Consecutive Days of Absence** - Where a student is absent for more than one day, parents or guardians must inform the school on each subsequent day of absence unless a fixed return date has already been agreed. This ensures that the school remains assured of the student's welfare and whereabouts. If no notification is received, the absence will be recorded as unexplained and the procedures outlined in this policy will be followed.
- **Extended Absence** - In cases of extended absence due to illness or exceptional circumstances, the school will liaise with parents or guardians to determine appropriate academic support. Where appropriate and in line with the school's Hybrid Learning Policy, access to online provision may be arranged. Extended absence may require medical evidence or formal documentation, particularly where absence exceeds five consecutive school days.
- **Emergency or Exceptional Circumstances** - The school recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances, such as bereavement or significant family events, where attendance may not be appropriate. Parents or guardians should inform the school as soon as possible so that appropriate support can be offered. Each case will be considered individually.
- **Absence During Formal Assessments** - Where a student is absent from a scheduled internal assessment or cycle test, medical evidence may be required in order for the absence to be authorised. In cases of unauthorised absence from formal assessments, the procedures set out in the school's Assessment Policy will apply.

6. Recording of Absence

- All absences are recorded in the school's electronic management system and are classified as either authorised or unauthorised.
- An absence will be recorded as authorised only where the school is satisfied that the reason provided is valid and supported by appropriate evidence where required. Parents or guardians cannot authorise absence; this decision rests solely with the school.
- Where no explanation is received, the absence will initially be recorded as unexplained. If a satisfactory explanation is not provided within 48 hours, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Attendance codes are applied in line with this policy and the appendices. Accurate coding is essential to ensure that registers remain a reliable safeguarding record and a true reflection of attendance patterns.

7. Authorised Absence

Parents or guardians cannot authorise absence. The decision to authorise an absence rests solely with the school. An absence will be recorded as authorised where:

- Approval has been granted in advance by the school
- A satisfactory explanation is provided within 48 hours of the absence and is accepted by the school

- Appropriate supporting evidence is provided where required.

If no explanation is received within 48 hours, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Monitoring and Follow Up

Class Teachers or Tutors are responsible for ensuring that reasons for absence are accurately recorded in iSAMS. Attendance summaries are provided to tutors to support monitoring.

Where no explanation has been received, the tutor will contact parents or guardians on the second day of absence as a reminder and to confirm the student's welfare.

Patterns of absence, repeated short term illness, frequent medical appointments or declining attendance will be reviewed by the class teacher or form tutor in the first instance. Concerns will be discussed with parents or guardians and appropriate support offered.

If attendance does not improve, parents or guardians will be invited to attend a formal attendance meeting with the class teacher or tutor to agree an action plan.

Where concerns persist, the matter will be escalated. The Class Teacher or Form Tutor will issue a formal letter and expectations clearly set.

If attendance continues to fall below expected standards, the matter will be referred to the Head of Pastoral and the Head of Section. Further action will be determined in line with this policy and may include referral to external agencies where appropriate.

Extended Illness

In cases of extended absence due to illness, parents or guardians must keep the school informed of the student's health and anticipated return date. Medical evidence may be requested where absence exceeds five consecutive school days. Academic support will be arranged where appropriate in line with the school's Hybrid Learning Policy.

Absence may be authorised for the following reasons, subject to the discretion of the school and, where required, the provision of appropriate evidence:

- Illness, where the school is satisfied that the student is unfit to attend
- Medical or dental appointments that cannot reasonably be arranged outside school hours
- Religious observance in accordance with the family's faith
- Approved educational visits or curriculum related trips
- Study leave granted by the school during examination periods
- Approved work experience placements
- Fixed term exclusion in accordance with the Behaviour Policy
- Family bereavement or other significant compassionate circumstances
- Approved involvement in a public performance or national representation
- Off site examinations approved by the school
- Approved competitive sporting events representing the school or at national level.

Requests for absence for special or exceptional occasions will be considered on an individual basis. Approval is not automatic and will take into account the student's attendance record, academic progress and the potential impact on learning.

The school will authorise absence sparingly. Even where reasons are valid, excessive authorised absence may be treated as a cause for concern and monitored accordingly.

Lateness

A student who arrives after the register has closed but before 09:00 will be recorded as late. Where a satisfactory explanation is provided, the lateness may be authorised. Examples of acceptable reasons may include:

- An accident or significant traffic incident on the journey to school
- A confirmed vehicle breakdown
- A family emergency
- A medical emergency

Frequent lateness, even where individual incidents are authorised, will be monitored. Persistent lateness will be treated as a concern and addressed in line with this policy.

Excessive Authorised Absence

Excessive authorised absence may be as detrimental to a student's progress and wellbeing as unauthorised absence. The school will therefore authorise absence cautiously and only after careful consideration.

Where a student has a pattern of irregular attendance, further requests for absence may be declined even where the reason would ordinarily be considered valid. Attendance patterns will be reviewed holistically and in the best interests of the student's education and welfare.

Approved Educational Activity

Students who are registered off site, dual registered or engaged in supervised educational activity away from the school premises will not be recorded as absent, provided that the activity:

- Is educational in nature
- Has been formally approved by the school
- Is supervised by a responsible adult

In such cases, students will be recorded using the appropriate attendance code to reflect that they are engaged in approved educational activity. Accurate recording ensures that the school maintains a clear record of which students are physically present on site at any given time for safeguarding purposes.

Disputes

Where the school has reasonable grounds to question the authenticity or adequacy of an explanation for absence, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised pending further clarification. The decision to authorise or not authorise an absence rests with the school and will be based on professional judgement and available evidence.

Parents or guardians may request a review of the decision by contacting the Head of Section. Any additional evidence provided will be considered promptly and fairly.

If the matter cannot be resolved through discussion, parents or guardians may refer the issue to the school's formal Complaints Policy and procedure.

All attendance decisions and subsequent correspondence will be recorded to ensure transparency and consistency.

For attendance coding guidance relating to authorised absence, see Appendix 1.

8. Unauthorised Absence

An unauthorised absence is recorded where no explanation has been provided within the required timeframe or where the explanation given is not accepted by the school as valid.

Absence will not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- No explanation is provided by the parent or guardian within 48 hours
- The explanation offered is considered unsatisfactory or inappropriate, for example shopping or remaining at home without valid reason
- Family holidays taken without prior approval or in excess of the period agreed by the school
- Arrival after 09:00 without a satisfactory explanation
- Signing out of school without parental permission or school authorisation
- Requests for special occasions that have been formally declined.

Responding to Unauthorised Absence

The school's first responsibility is to ensure the safety and welfare of every student. Once the morning register has closed, Reception will identify any student recorded as "N" or unexplained and initiate first day absence procedures.

Parents or guardians will be contacted without delay to confirm the student's whereabouts. Where contact cannot be established, further attempts will be made using all available contact details.

Where there are known safeguarding concerns, or where absence gives rise to concern about a student's safety, the matter will be escalated immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. In such cases, the school may contact MEDUCA, SENNIAF or the police in line with safeguarding procedures.

Where a student who normally travels by school bus does not arrive at the collection point, the bus driver or chaperone will notify Reception immediately so that welfare checks can begin.

Parents and guardians may monitor attendance through the iSAMS or IGSP Parent Portal. However, notification via the portal does not replace the requirement to inform the school directly of the reason for absence.

If a parent removes a student from school without authorisation, the Head of School will arrange a meeting with the parent or guardian to investigate the circumstances and determine appropriate next steps.

In cases where there are concerns regarding potential parental abduction or removal from school, including during family law proceedings, parents or guardians must ensure that the school holds copies of any relevant court orders. The school will act in accordance with local law and safeguarding guidance.

Where attendance falls below statutory requirements, the school will comply with all relevant Panamanian regulations in notifying MEDUCA or other appropriate authorities.

For coding relating to unauthorised absence, see Appendix 2.

9. If a Child Goes Missing During the School Day

If a student is unaccounted for at any point during the school day, this will be treated as a safeguarding matter. Immediate action will be taken in accordance with the school's [Missing Child Policy](#).

Staff must notify Reception and the relevant Section Leader without delay. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed immediately and will oversee the response.

A systematic search of the school site will be initiated promptly. Parents or guardians will be contacted as soon as it is established that a student cannot be located. Where necessary, and in line with safeguarding procedures, MEDUCA, SENNIAF or the police will be informed without delay.

All actions taken will be recorded in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

10. Persistent Absence

Under Panamanian law, basic education is compulsory from pre school through Grade 9. Parents or guardians of children within this age range have a legal duty to ensure regular attendance at the school where their child is enrolled. Failure to ensure regular attendance may constitute a breach of duty under the Organic Law of Education.

The school monitors attendance closely to identify emerging patterns of concern at an early stage.

A reminder letter will be issued following three consecutive days of absence or five cumulative days of absence within a half term, in accordance with Appendices 3 and 4.

Persistent absence is defined as attendance below 90 percent over a given period. Severe absence is defined as attendance below 50 percent. These thresholds apply regardless of whether absences have been authorised or unauthorised, as both can negatively impact learning and wellbeing.

Where a student's attendance falls below 90 percent, parents or guardians will be invited to attend an attendance review meeting. An action plan will be agreed and monitored.

Where attendance continues to decline, the matter will be escalated to the Head of Section and Head of Pastoral. Formal correspondence will be issued and expectations clearly restated.

If attendance falls significantly below acceptable standards, or if concerns remain unresolved, the school may refer the matter to MEDUCA in line with Panamanian regulations.

Safeguarding Considerations- Attendance concerns are always considered through a safeguarding lens. Patterns of absence may indicate wider welfare concerns, including neglect, emotional distress or other vulnerabilities.

Where safeguarding concerns are identified, they will be managed in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. When appropriate, concerns may be shared with MEDUCA, SENNIAF or the police in line with Panamanian safeguarding procedures.

11. Lateness

Parents or guardians must ensure that students arrive at school in time to be present for registration at 08:00. Punctuality is essential to ensure that students do not miss important instructions, pastoral check ins or learning at the start of the school day.

Students arriving between 08:10 and 09:00 will be recorded as late. All late arrivals must report to Reception and sign in using the official Signing In and Out system.

Where a satisfactory explanation is provided, the lateness may be recorded as authorised. Where no satisfactory explanation is provided, or where arrival is after 09:00, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised for the morning session.

Frequent lateness, even where individual incidents are authorised, will be monitored as it may indicate wider attendance or safeguarding concerns.

Responding to Persistent Lateness

Persistent lateness is defined as punctuality below 90% over a monitoring period, typically a half term or term.

Tutors will monitor patterns of lateness and will contact parents or guardians where lateness occurs for three consecutive days or five days within a half term.

Where punctuality falls below 90%, parents or guardians will be invited to attend a meeting to agree an action plan.

Where punctuality falls below 80%, this will be treated as a serious concern and escalated to the Head of Section. Further intervention will be determined in line with this policy.

For correspondence relating to persistent lateness, see Appendix 6.

12. Procedure to be Followed When a Student Is Not Collected on Time

Parents or guardians must inform the school as soon as possible if they anticipate being late in collecting their child.

If a student is not collected at the end of the school day and no prior notification has been received, the following procedures will apply:

- The student will remain under supervision in a safe and appropriate location
- Reception will attempt to contact the parent or guardian using all available contact numbers
- If contact cannot be made, additional authorised emergency contacts will be called

If a student has not been collected within 30 minutes of the end of the school day and the school has been unable to make contact with a responsible adult, the matter will be escalated to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Where there are concerns for the student's welfare or where no responsible adult can be contacted within a reasonable period of time, the school may contact SENNI AF or the police in line with safeguarding procedures.

All actions taken will be recorded.

The school will inform parents/guardians/carers of procedures so that, if they are unavoidably delayed, they will be reassured that their children will be properly cared for. This information must also contain any financial implication of such delay.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Head of School has overall responsibility for the implementation, oversight and effectiveness of this policy. The Head of School will ensure that attendance is prioritised across the school and that appropriate systems are in place to monitor and respond to concerns. The Head of School will inform the Regional CEO of any significant challenges relating to the implementation of this policy.

The Regional CEO is responsible for approving updates to this policy in line with Inspired governance procedures.

Heads of Section are responsible for the day to day operational oversight of attendance within their phase. They will monitor attendance data, lead attendance review meetings and ensure that appropriate interventions are implemented.

The Head of Pastoral and the Designated Safeguarding Lead are responsible for ensuring that attendance concerns are considered within a safeguarding framework and that appropriate referrals are made where necessary.

Tutors and class teachers are responsible for:

- Accurate and timely completion of registers
- Monitoring patterns of absence and lateness
- Communicating concerns to parents or guardians in the first instance
- Escalating concerns in line with this policy

Reception staff are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the attendance register, initiating first day absence procedures and ensuring that signing in and out procedures are followed correctly.

Parents and guardians are responsible for ensuring regular attendance, providing timely explanations for absence and complying with this policy.

COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING

This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if required, in response to changes in legislation, regulatory guidance, safeguarding practice or operational need.

Attendance data is monitored regularly by Section Leaders and reviewed termly by the Senior Leadership Team to evaluate effectiveness and identify trends.

The impact of this policy is evaluated through attendance patterns, safeguarding oversight and compliance with BSO and Panamanian regulatory requirements.

Any significant amendments to this policy must be approved in line with Inspired governance procedures.

Appendix 1- Authorised absence coding

The following codes to be used in iSAMS when recording authorised absences:

- Illness (I) - This code is used when a student is ill and the school has been informed. Schools can request medical evidence from parents / guardians / carers if they feel the authenticity of an illness is in doubt
- Medical / Dental appointments (M) - This code can be used when the student needs to attend a medical or dental appointment and the parents / guardians has informed the school. Parents / guardians / Carers are encouraged to arrange appointments out of school hours but the school will authorise if confirmation of the appointment is provided.
- Approved sporting activity (P) - This code will be used in times of approved sporting activities in school times, i.e. training sessions, trials and sporting events.
- Educational visit or trip (V) - This code will be used in times of approved educational visits or events in school times, i.e. revision days, subject trips.
- Authorised circumstances (C) - This code will be used for any authorised non-medical reasons for a child's absence from school, i.e. family funeral.
- Study Leave (S) - This code will be used during mock and external examinations for students that have been given parental permission to work from home.
- Excluded (E) - This code will be used when a student has been excluded from school.
- Work experience (W) - This code will be used when a student is attending work experience.
- School closed to students (#) - This code will be used when the school is closed to students.
- No reason yet provided for absence (N) - This code will be used when the school has not been informed of the reason for a student being absent.
- Religious observance (R) - This code will be used when a student is absent for a religious observance.
- Pupil withdrawn from normal lessons (Q)
- Interview (I) - This code will be used when it has been agreed that the student can miss school to attend an interview or entrance exam.
- Family Holiday not agreed (G) - This code will be used when a student is on holiday, and it is not authorised.

- Educated off site (B) - This code is used when students are being educated offsite, ie a University Visit, or attendance at a non-sporting competition at a local school.
- Dual registration (D) - This code is used when a student is registered at another educational establishment, whilst still on the school roll.
- Pupil not yet on roll (Z) - This code is used if a student has been excluded and the parents / guardians are appealing, so the student stay on roll.

Appendix 2 - Unauthorised absence coding

The following code to be used in iSAMS when recording unauthorised absences:

- Unauthorised absence (O) - This code will be used when the absence is not authorised.

Appendix 3- Absence correspondence with parents / guardians

- Day 1. Once the morning register has closed, Tutors / Advisors need to select the send parent notifications button, to inform parents / guardians and this automatically sends a note to all parents / guardians whose child(ren) have a "N" on the register.
- Outline the absent reporting guidelines.
- Request parents / guardians to inform school of reason for absence.
- Parents and guardians are reminded that if the school has concerns for a student's safety, we will immediately contact the police and/or child protection services.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, or concerns for the safety of a pupil, the school will notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead and contact parents or guardians immediately once the absence is noted.
- Day 2 and subsequent days. School will phone parents / guardians / other named contacts to establish whereabouts of the pupil.
- If unable to speak to parents / guardians / named contact – SMS / email parents / guardians asking them to contact school urgently.
- Remind parents / guardians that if there are any concerns for the student's safety then school will call police and / or child protection services.
- The School Designated Safeguarding Lead, Mrs Zoe Pett, will review all unauthorised absences from the second day of absence.

Appendix 4 - Correspondence for concerning absence

This letter should be sent by reception to parents / guardians if a student has 3 consecutive days or 5 days absence in a half term.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian:

Attendance is an essential component to a student's academic success. Often, the number of days that students are absent accumulate without parents / guardians realising how many days have been missed.

This letter is to inform you that your child has accumulated 5 absences this half term / three consecutive absences this half term.

At this time, you and your child have an opportunity to work towards improving attendance without further intervention. However, if your child's absence falls below 80% the school will invite you to an attendance review meeting with the Head of School.

We look forward to working with you to improve your child's attendance. Please contact us if there is any way that we can assist in this process.

Thank you in advance for your support and cooperation.

Appendix 5 - Correspondence for persistent absence

This letter should be sent by reception to parents / guardians if a student has below 80% attendance in a half term.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian:

Attendance is an essential component to a student's academic success. Often, the number of days that students are absent accumulate without parents / guardians realising how many days have been missed.

This letter is to inform you that your child's attendance is currently below 80% which according to government guidelines is an 'unacceptable' level.

Although your child's absences may have been authorised, any absence means a loss of contact time with the teacher and a loss of critical instruction. This is very difficult for a student to make up, even with parental help at home, and will need a clear plan for the student to ensure completion of missed work.

Research into the link between absence and attainment concluded that as the level of overall absence increases, the likelihood of achieving key attainment outcomes at the end of a key stage decreases.

The Head of School will be in contact with you to arrange an attendance review meeting. We look forward to working with you to improve your child's attendance.

Thank you in advance for your support and cooperation.

Appendix 6 - Correspondence for persistent lateness

This letter should be sent by reception to parents / guardians if a student has below 80% punctuality in a half term.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian:

Punctuality is an essential component to a student's academic success. Often, the number of days that students are late accumulate without parents / guardians realising.

This letter is to inform you that your child's punctuality is currently below 80% which according to government guidelines is an 'unacceptable' level.

When students arrive late, they miss out on essential instructions given at the beginning of the lesson. This can significantly reduce achievement, regardless of academic ability. Your child may also feel awkward arriving to the classroom when everyone else is settled. Furthermore, when one student arrives late, it disrupts the entire class and the teacher, thus everyone's education is compromised.

The Head of School will be in contact with you to arrange an attendance review meeting. We look forward to working with you to improve your child's attendance.

Thank you in advance for your support and cooperation.