



Attendance And Absence

All you need to know about Pupil Attendance and Absence at Okehampton College

This leaflet of frequently asked questions is to help you follow the procedures we have in place at Okehampton College

Why is attending school regularly so important?

Regular attendance at secondary school is vital to help children achieve and to give them the best possible start in adult life. Children who frequently miss school often fall behind. There is a clear and persistent link between absences from school and achievement in examinations: The higher the number of sessions missed in school, the lower the likely level of achieved in examinations. The most recent analysis by the Department for Education showed how “missing the equivalent of just one week a year from school can mean a child is significantly less likely to achieve good GCSE grades”. Absence from school is a clear indicator that a child’s education is being harmed. Good attendance at school shows potential employers that a young person is reliable. Young people who are frequently absent from school are more likely to become involved in, be exposed to or or become a victim of crime and anti-social behaviour. The earlier we get our children in to the right habits, the better. www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence

What time does my child need to be at school?

School gates are open from 8am. Lessons start at 8.45am. We expect your child to be in class by 8.40am so they can organise their belongings and settle, ready for the 8.45am start.

It is important that your child is ready for a prompt start to learning each day. If they arrive late, this can cause anxiety and embarrassment as their peers have already settled to their learning.

What happens if they are late coming to school?

All children who are late for school must report to the main student reception, where they will need to sign in. The staff will log the time the pupil has arrived and the reasons he or she is late. This is really important for safety in case there is a need to evacuate the building – we need to know exactly who is in school.

Does it matter if my child is late for school?

Yes absolutely. Both the school and the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) monitor children who are late and the reason why. If your child is late without justifiable reason after the register has been taken on 10 occasions in any period, you can be fined £60. You will receive a letter from school before ten sessions are reached, keeping you updated. We keep a record of all late arrivals at school and they are recorded on our electronic system. This is monitored by Devon County Council. Not only does your child need to settle into class when arriving late but an adult needs to inform them of the learning they have missed and what they need to do next. This takes our staff away from supporting other children.

If your child is going to be late, for whatever reason, please contact school to make us aware, giving an approximate time of arrival.

Can a child take time off during term time to go on holiday or for family events?

The government states that you must get permission from the Principal if you want to take your child out of school during term time. You must make an application to the Principal in advance and will only be given permission if there are exceptional circumstances. You will need to complete an 'Absence Request Form', which can be collected from the college reception, requested via email, or downloaded from our website. If the Principal gives permission, which is very unlikely, it is also up to the Principal how many days your child can be away from school.

I haven't had permission to take my child out of school during term time, what could happen if I still do this?

If you do not have authorisation to take your child out of school and you still do so, you will be fined by Devon County Council. A second occurrence within a two year period will result in a Summons to Court. In addition, if you provide a false reason for your child being absent and it is later determined that you have been on holiday/absent without permission, again you can be fined.

www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance

My child has a medical appointment, what do I do?

Wherever possible, all appointments must be outside of the school day. However, we recognise there are circumstances where you will need to book emergency appointments. Please let the main office know of these appointments as soon as possible. In order to authorise such an absence, we must have supporting evidence on all medical appointments, so please either supply this information before or after the appointment. This can be supplied by email, text or in hardcopy.

My child is too ill for school – what do I do?

Please ring the school from 8am and make the Admin staff aware of the absence, stating the reason and giving some indication as to when your child may be well enough again for school. Your child's tutor, SPL or the college's attendance officer may contact you later in the day to discuss the absence. We want to develop resilience in our children for attendance and teach them that only appropriate illnesses necessitate absence. Also, if your child seems unwell early in the morning, but then bounces back, bring them into school; we are always able to ring you in the day to collect your child if needed. If you are unsure, please ring us and speak to our first aid team as we hold a Local Authority medical directory that informs of us of levels of contagion etc. and gives specific guidance for many illnesses. Diarrhoea and vomiting virus require a 48 hours clearance before returning to school.

My child has been absent quite a lot without any justifiable reason, what might happen?

Where parents have not contacted school and a child is absent, we will text and email home by 10am to find out why your child is not at school. If we have not heard from you by 11am we will call you. Your child's tutor, SPL or the college's attendance officer may contact you later in the day to discuss the absence. This is to ensure the safety of our children. For example your child might have set off for school from home on their own but not actually arrived at school; if we don't contact you, no one would know and something serious could have happened. This is an expectation for all schools nationally. Any child who has ten or more unjustified sessions will be referred to the Education Welfare Services and fines can be issued. For more information go to www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child is in school unless there are valid reason.

My child repeatedly doesn't want to come to school – what can I do?

We want all of our children to come to school happily and enjoy their learning and social activities. Please speak with your child's tutor as soon as you have any concerns. We are here for you and your child.

Who knows if my child is often late or misses school regularly?

The school monitors this very closely and all our attendance is logged electronically. Devon County Council access this to ensure that all children have the best possible attendance. We would never wish for your children to miss school regularly and we would want to work with you to address this.

What should my child's attendance record look like?

We aim for children to have an attendance of 96% or above as evidence shows that a level below this figure can have a detrimental effect upon education. We monitor our students attendance closely and will inform you of any potential concerns as soon as a concern is raised so that we can work together to avoid any upsetting legal action. We want your child in school – enjoying, learning and achieving.

What is a 'persistent absentee'?

The government says that any child with an attendance rate of 90% or below is a "persistent absentee". This means that a child will have missed at least 19 school days – which equates to almost 4 school weeks over the year. Only exceptional illnesses/incidents would result in such percentage rates. If a fortnight holiday is taken during term time, your children's attendance is already close to triggering this issue. The EWO works very closely with families whose children have this low level of attendance.

How do school encourage good attendance and punctuality?

We promote good attendance with all of our children in a range of ways: use of our school newsletter to keep parents/carers informed of expectation; certificates for children and classes; prizes on a termly basis; celebration and recognition in front of their friends during assembly times; explaining clearly with our children the importance of good attendance, and welcoming our children in to school.

Don't forget. The government, Devon Local Authority and our school monitor attendance very carefully – it's because we care.

Did you know?!?!?

- If you are 5 minutes late every day... that adds up to over 3 full school days lost each year.
- If you are 15 minutes late every day... that adds up to 9.5 days, nearly 2 full school weeks lost each year.
- If you are, absent from school 1 day every fortnight... you will miss half of a year of your secondary education.
- If you are absent from school 1 day a week... you will miss 1 full year of your secondary education

There are 365 days in a year....you only have to attend school for 190 of those days...that leaves you with 175 days for everything else!!!!