



St Ursula's Convent School
A Humanities College and Teaching School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy reviewed by:

HEADTEACHER
GOVERNORS
SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Reviewed	Agreed by Governing Body	Next review
March 2017	March 2017	Date of next review as required by Governors

Attendance Policy

Vision

All staff and governors recognise that education is the key to achievement for all young people and that irregular attendance can lead to educational disadvantage and can place young people at risk, possibly leading to patterns of anti- social or criminal behaviour.

This Policy has links with:

- The Child Protection Policy
- The Behaviour Policy

Aims

We aim to:

- Encourage parents/carers to recognise their legal responsibility in ensuring regular attendance and to work in partnership to encourage good attendance.
- Encourage students through the curriculum and the pastoral programme to recognise the importance of good attendance in achieving their full educational potential and to develop good habits in preparation for the world of work.
- Work towards ensuring that all students feel supported and valued, sending out a clear message that if a student is absent she will be missed.
- Work in partnership with agencies such as the Attendance Advisory Service to encourage and monitor attendance.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the registration process and the Law relating to attendance.
- Implement a structured system of attendance monitoring at all levels.
- Evaluate procedure on a regular basis.
- Offer appropriate support to students who are experiencing difficulties with attendance.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, students and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this We, the school:

- Expect students to attend school at **least 95%** of the year;
- Monitor attendance on a weekly basis, and contact parents whose child's attendance is giving cause for concern;
- Give you details on school attendance trends in our newsletter;
- Prepare a print-out of your child's attendance certificate if you have concerns;
- Celebrate good or improving attendance by rewarding individual and class achievements;
- Promote good attendance, and its positive effects in assemblies and form time.
- Work closely with our Attendance Advisory Officer (AAO) to promote good attendance, and challenge poor attendance.

Statutory Duty of Schools

The Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all pupils of Compulsory School Age who are on the school's admission roll. The Education Act 2002 and the Anti - Social Behaviour Act 2003 place a legal responsibility for enforcing regular school attendance on the LEA. This responsibility is delegated to the Attendance Advisory Officers. Legal action can be instigated against parents/carers whose children fail to sustain an acceptable level of attendance and where parents/carers are failing to fulfil their responsibility.

The Statutory Framework

Regulation of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 states that every school must keep:

- An admissions register
- An attendance register

The admission register and the attendance register of every school must be available for inspection during school hours by:

Any of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools appointed under Section 1(2) or 5(2) of the Education (Schools) Act 1992(a);

Any Inspector registered under Section 10 of that Act

DfE Guidance

Social Inclusion: Pupil Support circular10/99 and 11/99 state that:

The Law requires regular attendance. Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a student of compulsory school age is absent, the register must show whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence is where the school has given approval in advance for a student of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for the absence.

All other absences must be treated as unauthorised. The governing body (which is legally responsible for the attendance register) must register with the Data Protection Registrar under the Data Protection Act 1998.

What are the different types of absence?

- Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required in writing/email.
- Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.
- Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (AAO) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping students off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Students who arrive at school too late to get a mark.
- Shopping, looking after siblings, birthdays, Day Trips and Holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Excessive illness without medical evidence.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absence (PA)

- A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason.
- Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need parents’ fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.
- We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority.
- PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Exceptional Leave

- Taking holidays in term time will affect your child’s schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not organising holidays during term time.
- Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child’s education.
- **There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.**

- Exceptional Leave will always be refused in Year 11.
- Exceptional Leave will always be refused when a student's attendance is less than 90%.
- Exceptional Leave will always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
- Exceptional Leave will always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
- Reasons for Exceptional Leave should be logged on the student's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process

The AAO may issue Fixed Penalty Notices for any unauthorised absence if the pupil's attendance is below 85%, and the school may refer these incidences to the Attendance Advisor Officer.

School Procedures

- Students should arrive for school at 8.30am
- Students must be outside the classroom of their first lesson by 8.35am.
- The register will be taken at 8.40 am and any students arriving after this time will be marked absent and asked to sign in using the late book in the St Dominic's.
- The School gate will be closed at 8.40 am any late comers will be logged by staff on duty operating the Late Gate. Journals will be marked as late.
- KS4 and Year 9 Students arriving late will be required to attend lunchtime detention in St Benedict's that day. Years 7 & 8 pupils will have a 10minute detention that evening with their first lesson subject tutor.
- Any pupils who have two lates in any week beginning Tuesday will have a one hour detention with Year Leaders on a rota on the Friday. A text message will be sent home by Thursday of that week.
- Students should arrive for afternoon registration promptly; this is the first lesson of the afternoon session. Failure to do so will result in a detention by the subject teacher at the end of the school day.
- If a student is absent her parent/carer should telephone or email the school by 9.00am to report the absence. Upon her return to school the parent/carer should send in a note explaining the reason for the absence.
- A text message will be sent to all parents of pupils who are absent and no reason received or given by prior notice by 9.30am each day.
- Pupils must sign in at St Dominic's if they arrive after the Late Gate has finished, their journal will be stamped. If a pupil has been for a Medical Appointment an appointment Card or letter must be seen copied and placed in their file.
- Pupils who fall below 95% will be placed on the School Referral System and brought to the attention of the Borough Attendance Advisory Officer.
- Pupils who fall below 90% attendance will be placed on the Fast Track referral system.
- When a pupil's attendance falls below 85% the Borough Attendance Advisory Officer will engage with the family.

Fast Track to Attendance

The Fast Track to Attendance framework is a time-focused approach to case management for absence (whether authorised or unauthorised), with flexibility to select the most appropriate and effective interventions from a range of possible responses at each stage of the process.

The aim of Fast Track to Attendance is to promote early intervention by the school and, when necessary, by the Local Authority (LA). The approach aims to ensure that rapid and appropriate action is taken to tackle absence problems as soon as they become apparent.

This includes:

- Early identification and follow-up of absence
- Analysis of absence patterns
- Identification of any underlying causes of absence or mitigating circumstances and taking action to address these
- Engaging the parent and child and specifying what improvements need to be made over a set time frame (usually 6 weeks)
- Ensuring that, where appropriate, parents are prompted to focus on their responsibilities to ensure their child's regular attendance at school
- Application of sanctions and compulsory measures where the parent fails to take their responsibilities seriously and the required improvements are not made within the specified time frame
- Appropriate re-integration arrangements when the pupil returns to school
- Regular monitoring of absence by the school and LA after cases have exited the Fast Track to Attendance process and taking action as appropriate.

Fast Track Procedures

- Early identification by the school.
- The school carries out its pre-referral responsibilities.
- A referral is made to the AAO. Absence must remain unauthorised whilst referred to the AAO and Fast Track. If there are medical reasons for absence, a medical certificate must be produced.
- The AAO, will (within 5 working days) attempt to make contact with the family, and carry out an initial assessment.
- The AAO will send out the School Attendance Warning letter to parents.
- The first Fast Track Meeting will be arranged.
- The school will send invitation letters to parents (copies to the AAO) and arrange an appropriate venue in school.
- A date for the next review should be agreed at this stage

If deemed necessary a Fast Track panel meeting will be arranged with Governors

- The Panel will be made up of a Governor who will Chair the Meeting, a member of the Senior Leadership Team and the AAO for the School and the PSA. The process will follow the same as a Fast Track meeting.

At the initial Fast Track Meeting,

- Panel members will be introduced by the Chair who will explain why the meeting is being held and ask parents if they have understood.
- The PSA will be asked to initiate a short discussion regarding the pupil's absence and the AAO will advise the parents about the Fast Track Review and the options that will be considered at that meeting.
- An Action Plan will be written up, agreed and signed by all. It will be noted on the Action Plan if the parent refuses to sign or co-operate, and also if they are not present.
- If a parent fails to attend the meeting an Action Plan will be written in their absence.
- The school will write to the parents the following day after the initial Fast Track Panel Meeting has taken place, sending a copy of the Action Plan and inviting the parents and pupil to a Review Meeting in 6 weeks' time (copies to the AAO).

Review Fast Track Meeting

The Governor will again Chair the Review Fast Track Panel Meeting.

- He/She will introduce the Panel again.
- There could be three decisions from this meeting:
 - Case Closed
 - A further review in 6 weeks' time.
 - Legal intervention

The school must write to parents, the following day (copy to AA Service) to confirm the Review Fast Track Panel decision. The AA Service, if appropriate, will carry out legal intervention.

Responsibilities

The role of the Deputy Head is to:

- Support the Year Leaders and Attendance Officer in monitoring attendance and punctuality.
- If a Student has been moved away from home because of Child Protection issues.
- Liaise with Attendance Officer, Attendance Advisory Officer and Year Leaders over students whose attendance may be at risk.
- Liaise with the Year Leaders over the management of students with medical needs.
- Liaise with the Attendance Officer over students on the Child Protection register to be contacted in the first instance of absence.

The role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is to:

Inform Social Services of any student on the Child Protection Register who fails to turn up to school. To monitor the attendance of vulnerable pupils and refer to AO as necessary.

Prevent/ FGM, any pupil who has not attended school or not returned following a school holiday and no contact has been made with the parent/carer the appropriate referral to the LA will be made. On return of the pupil, close monitoring of behaviour will be undertaken.

The role of the Year Leader is to:

- Work with the Attendance Officer in monitoring punctuality and attendance
- Investigate any serious cases of unauthorised absence referred by the Attendance Officer
- Analyse attendance data
- Inform the Attendance Officer and Office Manager of any changes of address (permanent or temporary) and details of special conditions.
- Acknowledge and celebrate pupils with excellent attendance and punctuality and also those with improved attendance and punctuality.

The role of the Form Tutor is to:

- Register the class either on SIMS or on a paper register which should be returned to the St Dominic's by 11.00am
- Collect transcripts of telephone call or letters from parents/carers detailing reasons for absence and ensure they are handed in to St Dominic's.
- Be aware of students who may have attendance issues that are linked to concerns over Child Protection and to be vigilant in reporting any unexplained absence to the DSL and YEAR LEADERS or Attendance Officer on the first morning of absence.

The role of the Subject Teacher is to:

- Take the register promptly by 8.50 am at the latest.
- If a student arrives after the register has been called the subject tutor should check she has a late mark in her journal, if she does not have one she must obtain one and sign in the late book in St Dominic's.
- All subject tutors must ensure the register is taken electronically for all lessons. When SIMs is unavailable a paper copy must be used and transferred as soon as possible. (ie; Supply Cover)
- Report to the Head of Department and Form Tutors any concerns they may have over poor attendance to their lessons of any student. Complete a Cause for Concern slip.
- Log the concern on SIMs.

The role of the Attendance Officer is to:

- Monitor punctuality and report any concerns to Year Leaders
- Make contact with the parents/carers of students who are absent for 1 day.
- Arrange lunchtime detention for KS4 and Year 9 students who have arrived late.
- Contact the parents of students with unauthorised absences by text by 9.30am and find out reasons for absence. If we don't receive a phone call or text response from parents by 11am, we then follow up with the emergency contact. Pass on the details of any absence that remains unauthorised to the Form Tutor and Year Leaders as this could be truancy.
- Maintain attendance and truancy information and provide an accurate summary on a weekly basis to Year Leaders and Senior Leadership Team.
- Liaise with Deputy and Year Leaders and tutors to identify patterns of truancy that require further investigation.
- Maintain, in liaison with Deputy and Year Leaders, a vulnerable "At Risk" list of students to be contacted on the first day of absence. This list may contain the names of students with a known truancy record or students on the Child Protection Register or child awareness register or any other pupil who is being monitored. Etc.
- Alert the DSL of any pupil who has not attended school or not returned following a school holiday and no contact has been made with the parent/carer appropriate referral to the LA will be made.
- The Attendance Officer is responsible for contacting the parents/carers on the first day. Telephone or text the parents/carers of all students and immediately those on the "At risk" on the first day of absence. Meet on a regular basis, the Attendance Advisory Officer to discuss students who have serious issues of attendance and report to SLT/Year Leaders on a weekly basis.
- Liaise with Year Leaders and Deputy over the outcome of these meetings.
- Update on a weekly basis the list of students who have been referred to the Attendance Advisory Officer and copy to SLT
- Receive telephone enquiries from parents/carers regarding absence; log the calls and pass information on to Form Tutor.
- Print and send out letters to parents/carers asking for explanations of unauthorised absence.

Supporting Students who have attendance problems

We recognise that some students may have attendance problems that could be caused by a variety of factors which may include chronic illness; anxiety; family issues etc. We aim to support students in a variety of ways including: Interviews with parents/carers Interviews with students Counselling Pastoral Support Programmes Individual support Programmes. Modified timetables Referral to a range of external agencies.