



St George's School Harpenden, Academy Trust

Attendance Policy

Date of issue: May 2021

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STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

We believe that children cannot learn if they are absent from school. Therefore, we aim to ensure that all our children and young people take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and to raise standards by promoting regular attendance and punctuality of all pupils.

Aims:

- To create a culture in which good attendance is accepted as the norm
- To demonstrate that good attendance and punctuality is valued by the school
- To maintain and develop effective communication regarding attendance between home and school

The Head is responsible for:

- the implementation of the policy
- all staff knowing and understanding their responsibilities for attendance
 - agreeing whether an absence should be authorised. The power to authorise an absence rests with the Head or delegated person within the school (the Head of House) and not with parents or the local authority
- working actively to maximise attendance rates, in relation to both individual pupils and the pupil body as a whole
- having clear strategies in place to address persistent absence
- ensuring that all staff adopt a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness
- monitoring trends
- implementing a system for all parents to report a child's absence
 - reporting to the Governing Body the attendance figures and progress to achieving the set targets
- reminding all parents of their commitment to this policy
- building respectful relationships with all staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. Make sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school
 - communicating openly and honestly with all staff, pupils and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them
 - Liaising with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable
- Modelling respectful relationships and appropriate communication for all staff and pupils. This will help relationships between pupils and staff to reflect a positive and respectful culture

All staff members should:

- treat all pupils with dignity
- build relationships rooted in mutual respect and observe proper boundaries
- take into consideration the vulnerability of some pupils and the ways in which this might contribute to absence handling confidential information sensitively
- understand the importance of school as a place of safety where pupils can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and pupils particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity
- communicate effectively with all families regarding pupils' attendance and well-being
- deliver clear messages about expectations, routines and consequences to new pupils and families through prospectus and admission/transition events
- use physical presence to reinforce routines and expectations on arrival and departure
- regularly communicate expectations for attendance and punctuality and school performance through regular channels of communication with staff, pupils and parents
- establish and monitor implementation of rewards for attendance and punctuality and sanctions for absence and lateness
- monitor implementation of policy and practice
- monitor whole school data regularly to identify reasons for absence, patterns, attendance of particular groups and the impact of interventions
- establish, implement and monitor robust arrangements to identify, report and support children missing education
- develop good support for children with medical conditions (including the use of individual healthcare plans), mental health problems and special educational needs (SEND)
- engage all pupils in consultation on attendance policy, practice, rewards and sanctions

Teachers are responsible for:

- setting an example of punctuality and good attendance
- implementing the policy
- ensuring that the registers are taken at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and that they are accurate and up to-date
- monitoring class and individual attendance patterns
- informing the Head of House of any concerns
- emphasising with children the importance of punctuality and good attendance
- reminding parents of their commitment to this policy
- building respectful relationships with all staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. Make sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school

- communicating openly and honestly with all staff, pupils and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them
- modelling respectful relationships and appropriate communication for all staff and pupils. This will help relationships between pupils and staff to reflect a positive and respectful culture.

Role of Parents:

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school. Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents are responsible for:

- ensuring that their children are punctual and know the importance of good attendance.
- instilling in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- impressing upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct.
- informing the school on the first day of absence, by 8.30 am at the latest.
- providing the school with a clear explanation for the absence.
- informing the school of any changes to their contact details.
- taking an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parent's evenings and other relevant meetings.
- working in partnership with the school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance.
- avoiding arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours.
- not booking holidays during term-time.
- treating staff with respect
- actively supporting the work of the school
- calling on staff for help when they need it
- communicating as early as possible circumstances which may affect absence or require support

The Assistant Head overseeing school attendance is responsible for:

- implementing the policy with the Head; school attendance, safeguarding and pastoral support policies should clearly outline:
 - the key principles
 - rules pupils need to follow
 - routines
 - consequence system

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data regularly to allow early intervention to address issues. This includes raising concerns with other agencies like children’s social care and early help services, which are working with families.
- Robust school systems that provide useful data at cohort, group and individual pupil level to give an accurate view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns amongst groups such as:
 - children who have a social worker including looked-after children
 - young carers
 - children who are eligible for free school meals
 - children who speak English as a second language:
 - children who have special educational needs and disabilities
- keeping the Head and all school staff informed of attendance figures and trends by providing regular reports to enable them to track the attendance of all pupils and to implement attendance procedures
- compiling attendance data for the Head, the Governing Body and the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO).
- ensuring registers are kept up to date
 - consultations with the LAAO.
- contacting parents if they have not reported their child’s absence by 8.30 am.
- sending a letter if no contact is made.
- arranging meetings with parents to ensure clear channels of communication are in place and offer support/interventions where necessary.
- Making sure escalation procedures to address absence are initiated proactively, understood by pupils and families, implemented consistently and their impact reviewed regularly.
- The escalation of procedures to address absence needs to be:
 - understood by pupils, parents and carers
 - implemented consistently
 - reviewed regularly
- ensuring that the Local Authority is notified of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly via a 10 Day Absence Form.

Encouraging Good attendance

The school encourages good attendance by:

- using clear and consistently applied systems and processes to improve, reward and incentivise attendance and address absences.
- makes sure these systems are inclusive and appropriate for all pupils.
- publicising good attendance during assemblies, displays, newsletters and the termly report to the Governing Body.
- awarding good attendance certificates to pupils when they have achieved 100%/excellent attendance or improved attendance.
- Offering other school incentives to celebrate good attendance including prize draws and stationery gifts etc.

Support for students with barriers to attendance

The school is committed to assisting all students with barriers which lead to lower attendance, whether these be connected to health, learning, SEMH, home issues or for any other reason. The Head of House will liaise with departments such as Learning Support and Student Services as well as with external agencies to ensure that students get the best support that they can to get them into school. Having a close working relationship with parents is key for producing good outcomes for students.

Attendance Protocols:

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their young person attends school. Effective education relies on regular and uninterrupted attendance at school. Therefore, students are expected to be in school during school hours and to be punctual.

School hours are from 0830 until 1520 Monday to Thursday, and 0850 to 1450 on Friday. The school does not take responsibility for students on site prior to 0830 (unless they are attending Breakfast Club or a supervised sports practice). Day pupils must not stay on site after 1530 (Monday to Thursday) or 1500 (Friday), unless they are taking part in an organised school activity supervised by a member of staff or are signed in as a guest in the boarding houses.

Any request for absence from school must be made in advance in writing and must be addressed to the Head of House. Under Herts and DfE guidance, permission to miss school can only be given by the school and not by the parent/carer. Requests from parents/carers are only granted in exceptional circumstances, and parents/carers should expect to give details of these exceptional circumstances. Only the school can authorise absences.

The school's role is to promote and monitor attendance. This work is overseen by the Heads of House and by the school's Assistant Head in charge of Attendance. By law, the school is required to investigate attendance of any student that falls **below 90%**. Parents/carers of students whose attendance falls below this figure must be able to account for these absences. Cases where absence from school is unauthorised will be investigated and could lead to Fixed Penalty Notices or the involvement of the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Officer.

Legally, the school is allowed discretion to authorise absence for certain activities such as university interviews.

Any other absence is categorised as 'exceptional circumstance'. Such requests might include absence from school for a wedding, which will be carefully considered by the Head of House.

Sixth form students may request permission to attend University open days provided they cannot attend open days available at the weekend. Such visits must also be to universities where the requirements for entry are realistically achievable for students requesting permission.

Sixth formers, who are over the age of 18, may write their own absence letters but it will remain the school's decision to check with parents and to authorise.

Travel during school time for the purpose of a holiday is not acceptable. This would only be allowed if there had been unforeseeable circumstances such as a flight time change for which evidence must be produced.

Decisions to take pupils out of school at the end or start of term for the purpose of a holiday will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and parents/carers can then expect to receive a letter from the school.

Boarders who arrive late back to school following home leave or who depart early are subject to actions as laid out in the Boarding Terms and Conditions.

1. **Late arrival in school**

All parents/carers of St George's students have made a conscious decision to send their child to the school. Even students coming from some distance are therefore expected to be on time. Students are marked late if they arrive after 0830 (or after 0850 on Fridays) or after 1420 (14.10 on Fridays). All students arriving after registration ends at 0850 must sign-in at Goddard Reception

Students who are late on three occasions in a half term may be set an after-school detention. For those students who are persistently late, further actions and support will be put in place.

Students who arrive after 09.55 are recorded as absent for the morning session and a note/email must be sent to allow the school to consider if the absence is to be authorised.

2. **Absence due to illness**

The absence telephone line (01582 765477) should be telephoned by 0800 on every morning of absence and a message should be left which outlines the exact nature of the illness. Alternatively, an email from a parent or carer's email account should be sent to the young person's House absence account: nameof house@stgeorges.herts.sch.uk. Please state your young person's name, year group and tutor group and state briefly the reason for the absence as well as using including 'absence report' in the email subject line.

If an absence is caused by diarrhoea and/or vomiting, please keep your young person away from school until **48 hours** after the symptoms have stopped to avoid spreading infection.

3. **Requests for Absence for other reasons**

Families, including those of boarding parents, who need students to be absent from school, must seek permission from their Head of House in advance. It is not acceptable for families to inform school that their children will be absent on that day, unless this is due to illness. Heads of House require notice of no less than 2 working days' notice in order to approve absences known about in advance. If the absence is not approved by the Head of House, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Please use 'absence request' in the email subject line.

Goddard House - goddard@stgeorges.herts.sch.uk

Grant House – grant@stgeorges.herts.sch.uk

Monk House – monk@stgeorges.herts.sch.uk

Watts House – watts@stgeorges.herts.sch.uk

Students will not be allowed to leave a lesson unless authorisation has been granted which will be added to the register.

For on-the-day emergency appointments e.g., for a broken brace, the school absence line must be notified of expected times for departure and arrival.

4. **Students' Safety**

Students in years 7 to 11 must not leave the school premises during the school day without prior permission from the Head of House who will contact parents before granting any leave. Students must sign-out and in at Goddard Reception.

Years 12 and 13 should use the signing-in screens on arrival at school **before** registration and use when leaving school during the day. All other absence protocols remain the same.

5. **Medical and Dental Appointments**

All routine medical, dental and orthodontic appointments are discouraged in school time because of the disruption that they cause to learning and should be made out of school hours.

6. **Sixth Form Driving Lessons and Driving Tests**

Sixth formers may use their private study lessons to book driving lessons with professional driving instructors. Students will need to gain permission from their HOH to authorise this absence and an email from a parent/carer giving permission must be forwarded before approval. All driving instructors must pick their students up from the coach lay-by and are not allowed to drive into the Aim Higher car park.

Driving Theory tests must be booked out of lesson times and the practical driving test should be booked where possible out of school hours too. Students must submit a request for absence in the usual way to their HOH.

7. **Illness during the school day**

Students taken ill in lessons should inform their teacher who will, if they consider it necessary, send them to the Medical Room. Students who feel unwell at break or lunchtime should also report here. The First Responder will inform the parent or carer if the student needs to be collected from school. This is the only process for a child who feels ill to be sent home.

8. **Missing Games**

Permission to be excused from PE or Games should be requested from the student's Head of House and should only be for medical reasons. An explanatory note from a medical professional may be required should staff see it as necessary to confirm and endorse the request. If permission is granted, students will be expected to attend the PE lessons with additional warm clothing if the lesson is outside.

9. **Truancy**

Truancy from school or from class is a serious offence leading to a Friday detention. Subject teachers are expected to take a lesson-by-lesson register to deter and reveal truancy and follow the 'missing child protocol' to ensure that all students are located.

10. **Sunday Chapel Attendance**

Sunday chapel services are an integral part of the life of the school for both boarders and day students. A minimum attendance of three services a term is expected. This attendance is mandatory as it also contributes to the required half-day attendance counting towards the school's minimum 190 school days for students in years 7 to 11. Those students who do not fulfil their chapel quota will have their early end of term leave withdrawn.

11. **Students with long-term absence due to illness.**

The school is able to apply for a limited amount of home tuition from 'The Education Support for Medical Absence' (ESMA) where a student is off sick for more than two weeks. Heads of House can apply for this. Where such long-term absence can be predicted, e.g., to convalesce following surgery, the Head of House should be made aware at

the earliest opportunity. The support for long term absent students due to illness aligns with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy.

12. Reporting to the Governors

The Assistant Head with the responsibility for Attendance will provide a termly report for the governors concerning attendance figures (with a focus on vulnerable groups) and patterns of attendance causing concern.

Date of Policy Review: September 2023