



STRATFORD GIRLS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

Attendance Policy

Disclosable under Freedom of Information Act 2000 Yes

Policy ownership

Governor committee: Progress & Wellbeing

Department responsible: Pastoral and Sixth Form

Post-holders: (title and name) Jacqui Cornell, Headteacher & Chris Hall,
Assistant Head: Progress & Wellbeing

Linked procedures Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy,
Behaviour Policy, Exclusion Policy

Responsible person Jacqui Cornell

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1. Aims & Ethos

At Stratford Girls' Grammar School, it is the aim that, students and staff should enjoy learning, experience success and develop their full potential. The aim of the Attendance Policy reflects this and recognises that regular attendance has a positive effect on the motivation and attainment of students and staff.

There is a clear link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement.

Our school aims to meet its obligations regarding school attendance by:

- promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents/carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

All students are expected to:

- attend 100% of lessons, tutor-time, assemblies and other learning opportunities, including work experience and other school trips or visits as directed by the School;
- be punctual to all lessons, tutor-times and assemblies etc.

*Note: It is vital that a student is marked present by the class teacher, especially at the beginning of the school day – 08.55 - and at the start of Period 5 – 14.10. If for any reason a student is late, they must **sign in** with the electronic fingerprint registration facility as soon as they arrive.*

Any student on an adapted curriculum as prescribed by the School is expected to meet the level of attendance set in that agreement and be punctual for all sessions and lessons that they are expected to attend.

The School's usual attendance rate averages at 96% or above. If attendance falls below this level the School will follow the procedures as explained in Section 4.

Attendance is closely linked to academic performance and emotional well-being. We monitor absences closely and are both guided by and report on the following thresholds:

- 98% or above is considered excellent.
- 96% to 97.9% is considered good.
- 95% to 95.9% is considered satisfactory.
- 95% to 90% is below the school average and will trigger contact from the school.
- 90% or below is a cause for concern and will require intervention strategies (90% attendance equates to ½ a day off per school week).

Any absence not initiated by the School must be covered by parental permission. Parents may not authorise absence; only Headteachers or those authorised by the Headteacher can do this.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. Attendance data is reported via the Headteacher's report at each Full Governing Body meeting.

The Progress and Wellbeing Committee have delegated responsibility regarding monitoring attendance and punctuality, and oversight of the School's Attendance Policy and procedures. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the School, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

The Assistant Head: Progress & Wellbeing

The Assistant Head: Progress & Wellbeing is expected:

- to monitor attendance data at the school and individual student level.
- to liaise with and support the Head of House/Sixth Form with attendance issues.
- to ensure appropriate action is taken to address attendance.
- to review monthly attendance print outs with the Head of House/Sixth Form and to follow up absences, concerns with students, and agree on strategies to improve attendance.
- to monitor persistent absence.
- to liaise with Headteacher regarding student attendance.
- to attend any necessary legal meetings with regards to attendance.
- to organise for a home visit to take place if there is no parental contact within two days, with support from progress team.
- to work with WCC Education Safeguarding Officers to tackle persistent absence.
- to advise the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

Head of Sixth Form

The Head of Sixth Form is expected:

- to review monthly attendance print outs.
- to follow up absences and address concerns with students, and agree on strategies to improve attendance.
- to monitor persistent absence.
- to liaise with and support the subject staff/tutors with attendance issues.

- to liaise with the Headteacher regarding student attendance.
- to ensure appropriate action is taken to address attendance.
- to attend any necessary legal meetings with regards to attendance.
- to organise a home visit if there is no parental contact within two days, with support from progress team.

The Head of House

The Head of House is expected:

- to review and monitor attendance data of their House group and at individual student level monthly.
- to review persistent absence list monthly and take action, as appropriate, to improve attendance.
- to meet regularly with the Assistant Head: Progress & Wellbeing to discuss action regarding students whose attendance falls below 96%.
- to ensure there is written communication with home where there are attendance concerns.
- to supervise late detentions.
- to organise and oversee the support for students who have been on long term absence.

Subject staff/tutors

Subject staff/tutors are expected:

- to record attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submit this information to the school office.
- to review and monitor attendance data of their Tutor Group and at individual student level monthly.
- to liaise with Head of House and/or parent/carer where there are concerns.

Pastoral/Sixth Form Support Officers

Pastoral/Sixth Form Support Officers are expected:

- to deal with correspondence from parents/carers about absence and record it on the school system.
- to provide the Headteacher, Assistant Head: Progress & Wellbeing, Head of House/Sixth Form with weekly attendance reports.
- to provide the Head of House/Sixth Form with the daily attendance concerns.
- to prepare a weekly persistent absence list for Headteacher, Assistant Head: Progress & Wellbeing, Head of House/Sixth Form.
- to contact a parent/carer at 10.30 on a student's first day of absence if this has not been previously explained.
- to liaise regularly with Heads of House regarding any attendance issues.

Parents

Parents are expected:

- to fulfil their legal duty and ensure that their child/ren attend/s daily and on time as stated in the school's home-school agreement.
- to email the school before 09.00 to explain any unplanned absence (see 4.5).

- to make medical/dental appointments out of school time as far as possible.
- to avoid holidays during term time.
- to write to the Headteacher at least six weeks in advance regarding any request for absence during term time.

4. School procedures

4.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all students are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present.
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity.
- Absent.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry.
- The amended entry.
- The reason for the amendment.
- The date on which the amendment was made.
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

4.2 Attendance practices

- Students should arrive in school by 08:50 on each school day.
- The register for the first session will be taken at 08:55 and will be kept open until 09:30 The register for the second session will be taken at 14:10 and will be kept open until 14:45.
- Subject staff mark the register using SIMS Lesson Monitor.
- Subject staff mark the register for each lesson for every Year Group.
- Students who truant lessons will receive a sanction and there will be written communication with home. Parents may also receive a phone call.
- Daily attendance is monitored by the Pastoral Support Officers (PSO), and Sixth Form Support Officers (SFSOs).
- Authorisation of unplanned absence in most circumstances requires parents/carers to contact the school via EduLink (the School's app) or email absences@sggs.org.uk **before 09:00**– and, when possible, inform the school of the expected duration of the student's absence. On the rare occasions when email access may be not be available to parents/carers, parents/carers should telephone the school **before 09:00**. On such occasions, a student will need to bring a letter to

Reception signed by a parent/carer on the day of return to school if email contact has not been resolved.

- Parents/carers of main school students are contacted by 10:30am where students have failed to arrive by 09:30 and notice of their absence has not been received.
- Parents/carers of sixth form students are contacted by the end of the day where students have failed to arrive and notice of their absence has not been received.
- When the parent/carer fails to report an absence two days in a row, and staff are unable to make contact on the phone, a home visit is carried out, where possible, by a designated member of staff.

4.3 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

- Students will be spoken to about their attendance by their tutor, Head of House/Sixth Form or the Assistant Head: Progress and Well-being.
- Unauthorised absences are followed up through communication with home.
- Persistent absence is reported to the Head of House/Sixth Form for further action.
- Where students do not achieve 96% attendance by the end of the term, their Progress Lead will conduct a review of their overall progress. Communication with parents/carers will follow if the Head of House/Sixth Form is concerned about the drop below any expected standards.
- When attendance continues to fall, the School will invite a parent/carer for a meeting.
- When further support for students with SEND is required, the Progress Lead will work with the SENDCo to create an action plan.
- A student's attendance percentage and their number of lates are included in the annual full progress report that is sent home to parents/carers.
- In severe cases of persistent absence, a student will be invited to a legal attendance meeting or in the case of sixth form; the student may lose their place.

4.4 Long Term Absence

- For all students where absences have been notified and are set to be longer than five working days, parents/carers will be asked to attend a telephone meeting so that medical information can be shared and procedures put into place to assist the process of catching up with school work either during the absence, if deemed appropriate, or on a student's return. This will be coordinated by the Tutor and/or Head of House/Sixth Form.
- When a student is absent, or likely to be absent, for more than one week on medical grounds, work will be set and marked by staff when deemed appropriate by the Head of House/Sixth Form (*see Medical Guidance Policy*).
- Where a student is hospitalised, the School will liaise with the appropriate services to ensure that they have access to the curriculum being taught during that period. On return to school, the student will be fully supported. The Head of House/Sixth Form will organise and oversee the support.
- In cases where extensive absence is accrued through intermittent absence, parents/carers and the student will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss progress, and to assess and agree any intervention strategies.
- At least five days' notice is needed for Tutors or Head of House to collate work.

- Permission for family holidays ¹, public performances and productions outside of school should be sought in advance (usually at least six weeks), in writing from the Headteacher. In accordance with Local Authority and DfE Policy, family holidays are rarely authorised.

4.5 Unplanned absence

Parents/carers must notify the School on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health.

- To report **illness or sickness** or any other non-negotiated absence on the day (*this includes when a student should be attending work experience, or trips/visits arranged by the school or link organisation*), parents/carers should contact the school via EduLink (the School's app) or email absences@sggs.org.uk **before 09:00** – and, when possible, inform the school of the expected duration of the student's absence. On the rare occasions when email access may be not be available to parents/carers, parents/carers should telephone the school **before 09:00**. On such occasions a student will need to bring a letter to Reception signed by a parent/carer on the day of return to school if email contact has not been resolved.
- If a student is not well and is likely to be ill during the day, they should not come into school as we do not have a medical room. In addition, their attendance could lead to more widespread absence if their illness is infectious.
- During exam time if a student is taken ill, School must be informed as soon as possible by phone or email to info@sggs.org.uk before the start of the exam session. Students must alert an invigilator immediately if they are feeling unwell during an examination. (*Please see the separate Exams Handbook for further details relating to illness or situations affecting exam performance.*)
- Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the School has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.
- If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the School may ask parents/carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily and any such evidence provided to us will be destroyed once the absence has been authorised.
- If the School is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.6 Medical or dental appointments

Advance notice is required for authorising absences that arise due to medical or dental appointments unless on the day of illness. This can be done by emailing the child's Head of House via email, absences@sggs.org.uk.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an absence. We strongly encourage parents/carers to make medical and routine dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

¹ Note on family holidays

Regulation 7 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) 2006 Regulations was amended in 2013 to prohibit Headteachers or 'proprietors' at maintained schools from granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the Headteacher considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. Term-time holidays would not be considered to be exceptional. It is, however, for schools to determine whether or not they agree to a family holiday during term-time. If a holiday is authorised (Code H) but the child is kept out of school for longer than the authorised period then the holiday is unauthorised (Code G). If a school does not authorise absence for a holiday at all but the child is still taken out of school the absence is unauthorised (Code G).

Parents/carers may be required to provide evidence of the appointment(s) if their child is requiring regular treatment.

4.7 Lateness and punctuality practice

- A student who arrives late but before the register has closed (09.30 or 14.45) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.
- A student who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.
- Students are expected to be in school by 08.50 and to register in tutor time at 08.55.
- If students arrive after the close of the register they should report to Reception and then sign in using the fingerprint scanners.
- In Years 7-11, students who arrive on more than three occasions after 08.55 am in a half-term will receive a lunchtime detention on the same day, carried out on a rota basis by the Heads of Houses, unless their parents/carers have contacted School with a good reason for their late arrival. Students who fail to turn up for late detentions will be referred to a Leadership Team detention on a Friday after school.
- In Years 12-13, all lateness is managed by Head of Sixth Form and will be sanctioned accordingly.
- All students who arrive after 10.30 need a note or telephone call from home explaining their late arrival. If no confirmation is received, this becomes an unauthorised absence.

Students who are persistently late will have letters sent home and are discussed with the Head of House/Sixth Form with regard to further action.

4.8 Reporting to parents/carers

A student's attendance percentage and their number of lates are included in the annual full progress report that is sent home to parents.

5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

5.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Permission should always be sought for a child to be out of school in term time. Applications for other types of absence in term time must be made in advance.

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to students during term time unless they consider there to be **'exceptional circumstances'**. We define 'exceptional circumstances' as distinct, unusual and untypical events or occasions. Family weddings, birthdays and reunions are not considered as exceptional due to the number of requests that we receive.

Occasionally, a student may need to apply for permission to be absent. Such permission can generally be sought in advance by a parent/carer applying in writing to the Headteacher via the Head's PA. The School considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** for all students include:

- illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 4.5 and 4.6.

- religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student’s parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents/carers’ religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absences may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision.
- a driving test (though driving lessons must not be scheduled for school time).
- if a student is an officially responsible carer for a family member and an emergency arises.
- representing the School, County or Nation at an outside event.

Similarly, requests for leave of absence for occasions such as national exams (including ballet, music, LAMDA) or a funeral should be made in writing to the Head of House via email, mainschoolpastoral@sggs.org.uk, giving as much notice as possible. All absences should be notified in advance.

In the case of the Sixth Form, all absence requests should be made in advance to the Head of Sixth Form, who will liaise with the Headteacher for authorisation.

5.2 Holidays

It is not school policy to authorise absences for family holidays in term time.

Holidays are not permitted in term-time, and this includes odd days at the beginning or end of term. Amendments made to the 2006 regulations in the *Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013* make it clear that Headteachers may not grant students leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Previously Headteachers had been allowed to grant students leave of absence (of up to ten days) for the purpose of a family holiday in special circumstances. The strengthening of these regulations does mean that such leave can only very rarely be authorised.

- Parents/carers should therefore avoid taking holidays in term-time altogether, and this is something that is stressed at induction. This includes odd days at the beginning or end of term, e.g. to enable travelling.
- Parents/carers are asked to note term dates which are published on the school’s website well in advance.
- Permission should always be sought. If permission is not granted and leave is taken anyway, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers should note that in condoning unauthorised absence, they may be breaking the law and could be fined (see section 5.3).

5.3 Legal sanctions

Your local council can give each parent a fine of £60, which rises to £120 each if you do not pay within 21 days. If you do not pay the fine after 28 days you may be prosecuted for your child’s absence from school.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the Local Authority’s code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year.
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission.

- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

6. Attendance Strategy

At Stratford Girls' Grammar School, we recognise that attendance is a key whole-school improvement issue and that it has a direct relationship with the attainment of individuals and groups of students and the standards thereby achieved by the school. We also recognise that attendance may be a particular issue for specific groups or individuals within school, and therefore our target setting process addresses these needs.

School will work with individual students and their families to overcome any barriers to attendance.

The school's attendance strategy is:

- To provide a clear vision for attendance, underpinned by high expectations and core values, which are communicated to and understood by staff, students and families.
- To ensure staff, students and families understand that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and understand their role in keeping children safe.
- To expect good attendance and punctuality from all members of the school community and make sure that students understand its importance.
- To realise that attendance is an important area of school improvement and ensure it is resourced appropriately.
- To ensure governors have an accurate view of school attendance and ability to deal with issues where appropriate.

The above strategy will assist in encouraging high attendance of students at the school and monitoring absence in order to be able to set attendance targets. Though not required to do so by legislation, the governing body sets an overall absence target for the following academic year. The annual overall absence target is the total number of absences which the governing body intends that students at school will not exceed in the school year, expressed as a percentage of the total possible attendances by students at the school (this is known as the 'absence rate').

The governors determine how many sessions we wish to improve by and then transfer that to a percentage. The governors, together with the senior leadership team of the school, regularly consider what may be the barriers to attendance at the school. They also consider how the school can attempt to overcome these barriers, thereby increasing the levels of achievement of individual students and the performance of the whole school.

We recognise that the Education Secretary may, if attendance is an issue, require us to set focused absence targets.

6.1 Internal processes for monitoring and reporting attendance

- The Support Officers monitor student absence on a monthly basis.
- Parents/carers are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.5) and should update the school daily if the absence will be prolonged.
- If a student's absence goes above five school days, the School will contact the parents/carers to discuss the reasons for this (see Section 4.4).

- Persistent absence is when a student enrolment's overall absence equates to 10 per cent or more of their possible sessions (from student absence in schools in England 2020 to 2021 DfE March 2022). If a student's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the student will be classified as a persistent absentee. Progress Leads will work with the family and the LA when necessary to improve attendance for any such student.
- Student attendance reports and absence data are shared electronically with Head of House/Sixth Form and Tutors. The data is stored within the school's secure IT systems. The data is used to track the attendance of individual students, identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern, and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.
- Student-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and Local Authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

6.2 Missing children

Where a student has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the student may be removed from the admission register if the school and the LA have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. The governors and Headteacher of Stratford Girls' Grammar School have safeguarding procedures in place which follow the DfE statutory guidance '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)' to follow up any such absences and will liaise with the LA on measures to be taken if a student appears to be missing from education.

6.3 Setting targets for specific groups of students

Whenever our internal monitoring identifies one or more specific groups of students at the school that have a level of absence higher than the national average for that group, we take appropriate action. Our internal monitoring focuses on the following groups:

- Looked-after children
- Free school meal eligibility
- Ethnicity
- First language
- National Curriculum Year Group
- Special Educational Need.
- Students who are persistently absent according to the number of absent sessions recorded in the school census

6.4 Setting targets for specific reasons for absence

When our internal monitoring identifies a reason for absence that is higher at our school than the national average level for that reason, then we advise the governing body it might be appropriate to agree an absence target to reduce the percentage of that type of absence.

6.5 Setting targets for persistent absence

When our internal monitoring identifies any students, who breach the annual threshold defining persistent absence then the governing body may be advised to set a target to reduce the percentage of persistent absence at the school for the following academic year.

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Assistant Head: Progress & Wellbeing. At every review, the policy will be shared with the PWB Committee.