Sydenham & Dulwich Girls

GDST
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

Whole School Attendance Policy

Policy statement and aims

School attendance is critical to academic success and social and emotional development. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school, with a cumulative effect. Regular or persistent absence can also indicate a pupil welfare issue. We ask parents to familiarise themselves with this policy, and to help us to promote the standards of attendance and punctuality which are essential for an orderly school environment where all pupils can get the maximum benefit from their education.

Our aims are:

- To develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes good attendance
- To ensure, as far as possible, that every pupil can benefit from and make their full contribution to the life of the school
- To build strong relationships with families, encouraging them to take an active role in promoting good attendance and punctuality
- To respond proactively to non-attendance and/or lateness in a proportionate and targeted way
- To work closely with pupils, their families and, if appropriate, the local authority where attendance becomes a concern.

We expect the highest standards of attendance and punctuality, reflecting our commitment to wellbeing and achievement. Our minimum attendance target is 95%.

Key contacts

The senior leader with overall responsibility for attendance at the school (Senior Attendance Champion) is Elyse Waites. For day-to-day attendance matters, please contact your child's class teacher or form tutor. For more detailed support with attendance contact Zoe Laker in the Junior school or the relevant Head of Year in the senior school.

Regulatory framework

This policy meets the school's responsibilities under the Education and Skills Act 2008, the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

The school has regard to the following statutory guidance and advice:

- *Working together to improve school attendance* August 2024
- *Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance* August 2024
- *Children missing education* September 2016
- *Keeping children safe in education* September 2025

How the school promotes good attendance

- Good attendance is established as part of the school's culture, reflected in both strategic planning and day-to-day systems and processes
- We set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicate these regularly and effectively to pupils and parents
- The school provides a safe, welcoming and stimulating learning environment
- Staff are supportive and approachable
- Data is used proactively to spot and address problems at the earliest possible stage

Partnership with pupils and parents

What the school expects of pupils:

- That pupils attend regularly, punctually and ready to learn
- That pupils are Juniorared for the day with appropriate equipment e.g., P.E. kit
- That pupils tell a member of staff if there is any problem which may discourage or prevent them from attending school

What the school expects of parents/carers:

- To fulfil their legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for absence in advance from the Head
- To notify the school of any absence or delay as soon as reasonably possible and to provide an explanation for this
- To arrange medical and dental appointments out of school times wherever possible
- To arrange holidays out of school term time
- To make any application for authorised leave of absence at the earliest opportunity and at least 14 days in advance
- To speak to relevant members of staff if they know of any problem which may affect their child's attendance or punctuality
- To cooperate with the school to improve attendance or punctuality if it has been raised as an issue

What parents/carers can expect from school:

- A school culture that promotes good attendance
- Efficient and accurate recording and monitoring of attendance
- Regular communication with parents/carers including reporting of attendance via emails home from Heads of Year when certain thresholds are met.
- First day contact with parents/carers when absence is unexplained
- Prompt action when a problem has been identified
- Liaison with the local authority to assist and support families where needed

School Roles and Responsibilities

GDST and School Governing Board

- Maintain an overview of attendance through termly reports

- Regularly monitor, review and challenge attendance data
- Review and support school interventions

Head

- Has overall responsibility for attendance within the school, including implementation of this policy
- Authorises exceptional leave of absence
- Reports to the GDST and governors on attendance

Senior Attendance Champion

· Is the nominated senior leader with responsibility for attendance across the school

- Ensures everyone works together to create a school culture that promotes good attendance
- Regularly monitors and analyses attendance data against a range of metrics
- Establishes and maintains effective systems for tackling absence, evaluating these at regular intervals
- Alongside the pastoral team, delivers targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Provides advice and support to school staff regarding attendance and punctuality issues
- Liaises with the local authority

Head of Junior School

- Regularly monitors and analyses attendance data against a range of metrics in the Junior school
- Establishes and maintains effective systems for tackling absence in the Junior school
- Alongside the pastoral team, delivers targeted intervention and support to pupils and families in the Junior school
- Provides advice and support to staff in the Junior school regarding attendance and punctuality issues

Designated Safeguarding Lead

- Becomes actively involved and leads where attendance is also a safeguarding issue

Attendance Officer

- Receives, updates and maintains accurate class registers in line with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Maintains the SIMS attendance database
- Meets regularly with the Senior Attendance Champion to report on individuals, patterns or trends of concern
- Makes contact by telephone call with parents/carers when a pupil is absent and written notification has not been received
- Runs a daily report of any missing marks and follows these up with teachers and pupils

- Runs a weekly report of any unauthorised absences and shares and follows these up with Heads of Year
- Liaises with the Head of Year and Designated Safeguarding Lead when a vulnerable pupil is absent
- Carries out relevant interventions
- Provides reports from the attendance database for the Head, Senior Attendance Champion and other school staff, SGB, and/or local authority officers as requested

Heads of Year – Senior School

- Promote good attendance and punctuality within the classroom and the school
- Analyse attendance data by individual, key group and by form group

Form Tutors (senior)/Class teachers (Junior)

- Promote good attendance and punctuality within the classroom and the school
- Accurately mark the am and pm register using appropriate codes, in line with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Look out for trends or patterns and liaise with the Head of Year or School Attendance Champion/Head of Junior if any concerns arise
- Deliver targeted intervention and support as appropriate

Registration procedures

Registers are a legal document, and care must be taken to ensure they are marked accurately and in accordance with the regulations. Attendance of all pupils is recorded and monitored following the procedures below:

Junior School

- Start of the Day: Registration is carried out at 8:35am. The second register of the day is taken following the end of lunch playtime.
- Registers will be open for 10 minutes [30 is the maximum]. Any pupil arriving after registration but before the register is closed will be marked late. Punctuality is monitored and frequent or regular lateness will be considered a cause for concern.
- Any pupil arriving after the register is closed will be marked absent. Parents should provide an explanation for any pupil arriving after the register has closed. Lateness without reasonable cause will be recorded as unauthorised absence.
- The attendance officer from the Junior school office checks for missing marks or unaccounted absences and contacts parents where required.
- Concerns are passed to the Head of Junior and Deputy Head, Pastoral.
- Specialist subject teachers take a register at the start of their lesson and if they are concerned that a pupil hasn't arrived at their lesson, then they should inform the attendance officer at the Junior school office immediately.
- If any pupil has to leave school before the end of the day, she must sign out at reception.

Senior school

- Registration is carried out at 8.30am and 1.40 pm.
- Registers will be open for 30 minutes. Any pupil arriving after registration but before the register is closed will be marked late. Punctuality is monitored and frequent or regular lateness will be considered a cause for concern.
- Any pupil arriving after the register is closed will be marked absent. Parents should provide a note of explanation for any pupil arriving after the register has closed. Lateness without reasonable cause will be recorded as unauthorised absence.
- Any pupil arriving after registration period should sign in at reception.
- The attendance officer checks for missing marks or unaccounted absences and contacts parents where required.
- Concerns are passed to the Heads of Year.
- Subject teachers take a register at the start of their lesson and if they are concerned that a pupil hasn't arrived at their lesson, then they should inform the attendance officer and front office immediately.
- If any pupil has to leave school before the end of the day, she must sign out at reception.

Sixth form – flexible day

All schools are able to allow pupils of non-compulsory school age to be absent for sessions they are not timetabled to attend. Sixth formers have a flexible day, recognising their growing maturity and bridging the gap between formal schooling and post 18 study or work. They must attend school every day, arriving in time for morning registration. They must attend all timetabled lessons but will be able to leave the school during their non-taught sessions, signing in and out. All regular appointments, driving lessons etc. must be scheduled for these times. Permission to miss taught lessons will not be given unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any student who does not attend lessons or whose progress is not good will have the privilege of a flexible day removed. Should a student be unable to attend school, parents/careers should notify the school as set out below.

Planned absence

Apart from illness, no pupil should be away from school without prior permission from the Head. All schools are expected to restrict leave of absence to the specific circumstances set out in the regulations. These are summarised below:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad
- Attending a medical or dental appointment (where it is not possible to make an appointment out of school hours)
- Attending an interview
- Religious observance
- Studying for a public examination
- Exceptional circumstances

If a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school. As stated in the regulatory guidance, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation is not considered to be an exceptional circumstance.

Parents should submit a request for absence to the Head no later than 14 prior to the date of absence. If an absence is authorised in advance parents will be notified and an absence note will not be required on return.

Absence for reasons other than those sanctioned by the regulations, for no reason given, or exceeding the terms of exceptional leave, will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

Unplanned absence

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school via phone or email concerning the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence and to provide such further information as may be required. If the school is not notified of a pupil's absence contact will be made to parents. The school will remain in contact with parents on a regular basis until the pupil returns.

If contact can't be made, the school will seek to assure itself that the pupil is safe and well, through confirmed contact with external professionals or a home visit by local authority personnel or school staff. Pupils who cannot be located will be considered missing and the school will pursue the matter in accordance with local procedures. A pupil on a Child Student/Student visa going missing will also be reported to the police and UKVI. Children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues, including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

On their return to school, parents must supply a note or email to prep@syd.gdst.net (Junior school) or absence@syd.gdst.net (Senior School). If this is not provided the absence will be investigated and recorded as unauthorised. Parents are informed if absences are recorded as unauthorised.

When a Senior school pupil is absent, they should have a return to school meeting with their tutor or Head of Year regarding any work missed. If an absence is planned in advance, the pupil must approach individual members of staff for guidance.

Monitoring and analysing attendance data and addressing issues

The school has systems to track absence and reasons for absence at an individual level and by cohorts or groups. Analysis includes lesson as well as school attendance, and punctuality both for am and pm attendance and for lesson attendance. The data is monitored and analysed regularly and over a range of time periods (short term/half termly/termly/annually) to trigger early intervention to address issues, trends or patterns.

Attendance thresholds and typical interventions:

Below school target	95%	Class teacher or form tutor discussion with pupil.
At risk of persistent absence	91-92%	Flagged at pastoral meetings; discussion between teacher/form tutor and parents.

Persistent absence	90% or less	Letter home to parents/meeting to discuss targeted support.
Severe absence	50% or less	More intensive support including referral to external services.

All measures will be regularly reviewed and stepped up if there is no improvement to the situation. Where a whole family response is appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment. Ultimately if voluntary support is not effective the school will work with the local authority to put more formal measures in place. Persistent or severe absence is always treated as a potential safeguarding risk.

Pupils with individual needs

Whilst punctuality and good attendance is an expectation for all pupils at the school, we recognise that this may be more of a challenge for some pupils, including those with special educational needs or disabilities, or those suffering from long term medical conditions or mental health issues. The school will allow for these circumstances when working with such pupils and their parents and will make reasonable adjustments / develop individualised support approaches as appropriate to meet their specific needs. If a pupil has an EHCP, the school will communicate with the local authority if attendance falls or becomes problematic.

The school is committed to supporting pupils who may be absent because of Emotionally Based School Avoidance. Where a pupil is missing school because of EBSA, the school will work closely with professionals supporting the child and the family as it takes a team effort to help the child find a way back into full time education.

Reporting to the local authority

The school has a statutory obligation to inform the local authority of the full name and address of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent unauthorised for a continuous period of 10 days or more.

The school must also inform the local authority of the full name and address of any pupil of compulsory school age who has been recorded as ill and the school has reasonable grounds to believe will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness.

Returning to school

On her return to school, parents must supply a note to the pupil's form tutor/class teacher indicating the cause of the absence. If this is not provided the absence will be investigated and recorded as unauthorised.

It is the responsibility of the pupil to make up any work missed through absence. Sometimes a pupil who has been absent for some time finds it difficult to return. In such circumstances the school will work with the pupil and parents to support reintegration.

Remote education

The school may, in very limited circumstances, provide remote education to enable pupils who are well enough to learn but not well enough to attend in person, to keep pace with their education. Such arrangements must be mutually agreed by the school, parents or carers, and if appropriate a relevant medical professional, and will normally be time limited.

Pupils who are absent from school but receiving remote education still need to be formally recorded as absent on the register using the most appropriate code. The school will keep a separate record of and monitor the pupil's engagement with remote education.