

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

1. Introduction and Attendance Ethos

St. Paul's School for Girls is committed to allowing each child the opportunity to develop fully as a person. To enable this to happen, it is imperative that all children attend school regularly. Only then can true continuity, progression, and equality of access to the curriculum for all children be ensured. In this way, each pupil, in line with our mission, can achieve the best possible personal and academic standards.

The school treats all pupils and parents with dignity and builds relationships based on respect to collaboratively remove barriers to attendance. While our historic baseline considered 95% satisfactory, the school aligns with the DfE standard to aspire to maximum attendance for every pupil, recognizing that missing school directly impacts academic attainment and safeguarding protection. In the Sixth Form, regular attendance is required, and failure to maintain regular attendance will result in Bursary payments being stopped.

2. Attendance Leadership and Contacts

As required by statutory guidance, the school has designated a senior leader to champion and oversee the strategic management of attendance:

- **Senior Attendance Champion:** Miss Carrie Pandhal
 - *Role:* Responsible for the strategic approach to attendance, analysing data trends, evaluating intervention efficacy, and overseeing formal multi-agency links.
- **Day-to-Day Attendance Contacts:**
 - For initial notifications of unexpected absence: The Pastoral Office / Attendance Administrator.
 - For detailed pastoral support or localised concerns: The student's **Form Tutor** or **Head of Year**.

3. Incentivising and Promoting Good Attendance

The School proactively encourages excellent attendance and punctuality through a supportive culture:

- Awarding attendance certificates on a half-termly basis for 100% attendance.
- Awarding 100% attendance certificates at the end of each academic year.
- Awarding 100% attendance certificates for the entirety of Years 7 to 11, 12, and 13 at the School Awards Day in July.
- Displaying attendance graphs on the Attendance noticeboard for each year group every half-term.
- **PAUL Criteria:** A termly reward is provided for pupils achieving 100% attendance, zero lates, a minimum of 15 positive logs, and no negative logs.
- Involving pupils in strategies to improve attendance through the Whole School Council. Pupil voice
- Providing pupils with the means to monitor their own attendance using the Student Guidance Handbook.
- Reviewing attendance from the previous academic year and setting clear targets for the new academic year during the first Personal, Social, Religious, and Health Education (PSHRE) session of the Autumn Term.

4. Day-to-Day Procedures and Managing Absence

- **Unexpected Absence:** Parents must phone the school on the first day of absence by **9:30 am** at the latest, providing a clear explanation.
- **First-Day Calling:** The pastoral administrator will phone home or send a text message on the first day of absence if no communication has been received by **9:30 am**. The school

aims to make contact with the home before **11:00 am**. If an unexplained absence persists, further contact and safeguarding protocols will be initiated, including notifications to a student's social worker if applicable.

- **Authorised Reasons for Absence:** Absence will only be authorised for legitimate illness, medical or dental appointments where evidence is appropriate, suspension/exclusion, or compassionate reasons determined by the Headteacher under exceptional circumstances. Medical evidence will only be routinely requested in minority cases or where a pattern of long-term or frequently recurring illness occurs.
- **Unauthorised Reasons for Absence:** Absences will not be authorised for standard family holidays, leisure trips, shopping, birthdays, minding younger siblings, or caring for unwell parents/carers.
- **Requests for Leave of Absence:** Parents must request any planned leave of absence in advance from the Headteacher by emailing attendance@stpaulql.bham.sch.uk. In line with DfE rules, leaves of absence will only be granted for *exceptional circumstances* at the discretion of the Headteacher. The school does not operate a blanket policy that automatically grants leaves of absence.

5. Punctuality and Register Closing Times

Punctuality is a vital life skill. Staff and pupils are expected to model excellent punctuality.

- **AM Registration:** Morning registration opens at **8:50 am** and closes exactly 30 minutes later at **9:20 am**.
- **PM Registration:** Afternoon registration opens at **15:10 (3:10 pm)** and closes exactly 10 minutes later at **15:20 (3:20 pm)**.
- **Late Registration:** Pupils arriving after the start of a session but before the register closes will register in the **Pastoral Office** and receive a 'Late' mark (Code L). Pupils arriving after the respective registration windows close will be recorded as an **unauthorised absence** for that session (Code U), unless a satisfactory, verified explanation is provided.
- **Sanctions:** Pupils who arrive late to school will receive an automatic after-school detention. Any pupil who arrives late but fails to sign in at the Pastoral Office will receive an after-school detention due to the serious health and safety/fire regulation implications. Parents will be notified of all punctuality detentions via email and in-app message.
- **Sixth Form Punctuality:** Form Tutors monitor Sixth Form lateness daily. Persistent concerns are passed to the Head of Sixth Form to complete statutory Bursary returns and coordinate target reviews. Concerns regarding punctuality will be detailed on official Reports to Parents.

6. Data Analysis and Cohort Monitoring

The school recognises that early intervention prevents entrenched habits of absence. The Senior Attendance Champion and Heads of Year leverage the **Arbor Attendance Module** alongside the DfE **"Monitor your school attendance"** tool to track trends beyond headline percentages.

- **Weekly Analysis:** Heads of Year check the official registers weekly to identify irregular attendance or early indicators of decline.
- **Targeted Cohorts:** Attendance data is specifically filtered and analysed to track vulnerable groups, including pupils with **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**, **English as an Additional Language (EAL)**, **Most Able status**, **Pupil Premium eligibility**, **Young Carers**, and students with active **Social Worker involvement**.
- **Intervention Steps:**
 - Heads of Year/Attendance Champion send formal letters home half-termly to the parents of any pupil whose attendance falls below **90%** (categorised as **Persistent Absentees**).
 - Heads of Year/Attendance Champion will invite parents into the school where an unacceptable pattern is emerging to co-create a localised action plan.

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- Pupil Group Coordinators share proactive action plans with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to remove in-school barriers (e.g., reasonable uniform, routine, or transport adjustments for SEND pupils).
- The school will work in partnership with the Local Authority to arrange formal **Targeting Support Meetings** and involve the local School Attendance Support Team.

7. Formal Support and Statutory Legal Interventions

Where voluntary, in-school strategies have been implemented but fail to secure improved attendance, or where parents do not engage, the school will escalate interventions in tandem with the Local Authority.

- **Education Welfare Service Referrals:** Pupils whose attendance drops below **90%** in any one term where in-school strategies have been implemented will be referred to the **Education Welfare Officer (EWO)**. Following a referral, further absences will require verification via formal medical evidence or a doctor's note.
- **Formalising Support:** If absence problems persist, the EWO may initiate home visits and formalize intervention through voluntary **Attendance Contracts** or statutory **Education Supervision Orders (ESOs)**.
- **The National Framework for Penalty Notices:** In cases where an unauthorised absence occurs and support is deemed inappropriate (such as an unauthorised term-time holiday) or voluntary interventions have been exhausted, the school will request that the Local Authority issue legal sanctions under the **National Framework for Penalty Notices**. This includes:
 - **Notices to Improve:** A formal warning letter issued to parents detailing a final period for improvement before a financial penalty is applied.
 - **Penalty Notices:** Financial fines issued to parents as an alternative to direct prosecution.
 - **Direct Prosecution:** As a last resort, if fines are unpaid or repeat offenses occur beyond the legal limit, cases will be escalated to the Magistrates' Court, where details of all school-to-parent communications will be leveraged in a Court of Law.