

St Martins School Attendance Policy



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Contents

1. Aims	2
2. Legislation and guidance	2
3. Roles and responsibilities	2
4. Recording attendance	3
5. Authorised and unauthorised absence	5
6. Strategies for promoting attendance	6
7. Attendance monitoring	6
8. Monitoring arrangements	7
9. Links with other policies	7
Appendix 1: attendance codes	8
Appendix 2: Student Absence Management Procedure	10

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to 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 to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the head teacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual student level
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Pastoral Staff

Pastoral staff are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.5 School admin/office staff

School admin/office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all students onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and before the start of the afternoon sessions after lunch time. 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 initials of the person who made the amendment.

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students must arrive in school by 9am on each school day.

Students attending Horizons are expected to be at the Irongate site between 9.15am -9.30am

The morning register in school will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.00am. The register for the afternoon session in school will be taken at 1.10pm and will be kept open until 1.30pm.

The register for the morning session at Horizons (Irongate) will be kept open until 9.30am. The register for the afternoon sessions will be kept open until 1.30pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.00am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

Parents/carers will phone the school office and give the reason for their child's absence. Parents/carers will make contact with the school every day for the period of absence.

If no contact is made by parents/carers the attendance officer will contact the family to find reasons for the absence.

If contact cannot be made a home visit may be necessary.

We will mark absence due to illness as 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 the student's parent/carer 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.

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.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

We encourage parents/carers to make medical and 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.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent until the student arrives in school. Late will then be marked on the register and a reason given in the notes box.
- Late due to circumstances out of the family's control such as taxi issues or unprecedented traffic situations will be marked on the register in the notes section.
- Patterns relating to late marks will be tracked and analysed. Action will be taken as appropriate and necessary.

- Any repeated reasons for lateness must be discussed and agreed with a member of the senior management team. These will be noted and reviewed as necessary.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason initially by telephone. If contact can not be made a home visit and a safe and well check may be necessary. This can be made by a member of the attendance team or a member of the family support team.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

4.6 Reporting to parents

Attendance will be reported to parents annually within the written end of year report.

Attendance levels may be reported termly or on an adhoc basis if attendance is causing concern.

The Education Welfare officer (EWO) will be alerted to any attendance causing concern and may contact parents/carers directly.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The head teacher will only grant a leave of absence to students during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' 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 Travelers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence 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.
- Family bereavement.

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a student's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the student will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Persistent absence will be monitored closely. This will take the form of in school monitoring of registers and attendance data. A notification letter will be sent to parents once a student has been identified as being persistently absent, this will be supplemented with phone conversations. A home visit may be made if necessary. The EWO will be informed of all persistent absentees.

A warning/legal challenge letter may be sent to parents/carers should attendance not improve. This may be accompanied by a full review of absence letter.

Full links with the SENCO and DSL are ensured once students are identified as being persistent absentees. Possible outcomes following DSL or EWO involvement may be referral to Early Help, an early annual review, reassessment of the EHCP, social services assessment or health care referral.

Further support may be sought through the SEND team or Social Care.

5.3 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a head teacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The 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 or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Attendance will be rewarded termly in the form of a postcard sent home to students with 100% attendance over the term.

Those with the most improved attendance will be rewarded termly by an appropriately selected reward with the Headteacher.

A class attendance league will exemplify the class with the highest levels of attendance each week. The class(es) who have the highest attendance levels at the end of each term will receive money to be spend on a class reward.

Special mentions for improving attendance will be made in Key Stage assemblies as appropriate.

Students achieving 100% attendance over the whole academics year will receive an award during the end of year celebration event.

Students at Horizons (Irongate) will receive a bursary directly linked to attendance.

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer at our school monitors student absence on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.

A student's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

Students parent/carers are expected to phone school every day that a student is absent, with the exception of when a fixed term period of absence is required for example 48 hours for sickness or diarrhoea or isolation due to COVID-19 in which case contact must be made with school to inform them of the reason and length of absence. If a student is off school for more than 48 hours, contact will be made with the family at least twice a week until the student returns to school. Individual circumstances may require more frequent contact.

If a student's absence goes above 2 days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the student to discuss the reasons for this and possibly carry out a home visit or inform relevant agencies.

If a student's absence continue to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a student's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the student will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Student-level absence data will be 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. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Attendance will be tracked and monitored using Integris. Attendance concerns will be recorded on My Concern.

Weekly attendance monitoring meetings will take place to discuss and identify any long term concerns. A vulnerability RAG rating will be used to identify vulnerable students and to inform discussions with the EWO.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 2 years by the attendance officer. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Positive behaviour support policy
- Horizons Bursary policy and guidance.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Student from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2: Student Absence Management Procedure

Pupil absence management procedure – 2021/22

